

The Crew of Misfortunates, Misfits, and Miracles.

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The Crew of Misfortunates, Misfits, and Miracles.

by [BubblyBee](#)

Summary

When worlds collide and meet in the oddest of ways, it can make an great impact.

George, a prince with ideas of adventure, finds them at sea alongside two pirates.

Only...they're a lot more than he ever expected.

Dream is an Exiled Fae who only wishes to forget his horrid past and live his life sailing the sea as Captain of "The Manhunt".

Bad, a siren hybrid who is clearly running from something, finds solace and protection on board "The Manhunt". But secretly, he fears this solace won't last forever- as the person he's running from is hot on his heels.

Skeppy is searching for someone he lost long ago, only clutching onto a small pink seashell given to him long ago. He enlists the help of Finn, A6d and Spifey- taking desperate turns and twists as he fears he may never find who he's looking for.

Tommy is an orphan who always looked for trouble, having his best friend Tubbo by his side to try and steer him clear of it. But when he sees a man with large bird-like wings, an angelic aura, and chains around his body practically call to him a dream- well, he's never been one to ignore the call of adventure has he?

And Techno? Well, he's just a God who's bored.

Notes

This is basically a pirate era au with a lot of fantasy and myth stuff added in. I was originally only put this up in some discord servers I'm in, and I got a lot of a positive feedback with people telling me to put it on ao3 so here I am. I hope you enjoy this story as it slowly spirals down a deep story of lore, worldbuilding, love, found family- and Bee just generally having as much fun with as many characters as possible and intertwining stories. Oh, and don't ship real people. This is its own universe in its own.

Wedding Crasher's

The bells tolled, ringing the familiar tune of "Here comes the bride".

It was a song that made most eager and happy- crowds of nobles gathered in the large hall. Everyone in the kingdom knew the wedding would be a splendid one. Everything was set perfectly. There was not a cloud to be seen and the sun shone brightly in the gorgeous blue sky, the air comfortably warm with a cool breeze accompanying it.

For any soon to be newly wed, these would be god-sent conditions. Meaning for a happy marriage and a lovely life.

But that wasn't the case for George.

George Non Inventi was not eager. He was not happy, nor excited, joyful, or feeling blessed.

The Prince dreaded this day the moment his parents announced it. The wedding bells made his stomach twist. His face hurt from giving the guests faked smiles, the suit was uncomfortable, the crown too heavy on his head, and the well-intentioned words seemed to mock him. The quips from his cousins and distant family about how he looked, how he didn't deserve this privilege, how he was not fit to be king- it was all upsetting.

He wanted out. He wanted to rip his arm away from his bride-to-be and storm out, never to return. To tell them all off and have a tantrum like a toddler. He wasn't ready for marriage. He didn't even like his bride- sure, she was a very sweet, pretty girl and all but he just wasn't interested.

But his stupid parents forced him into this. He didn't get the choice- he never got a choice with anything in his life. George's parents strung him like a puppet on the string, and it was only when the marriage was announced that he realized that. God knows he wished he'd realized it sooner.

"And do you, George Non Inventi, take Maia Toon as your lawfully wedded wife and Queen?"

George was pulled from his thoughts by the Priests voice, eyes flicking to meet Maia and then to the priests. He paused, voice caught in this throat. He wanted to say no, but as he glanced at his parents in the pews he knew it wasn't an option. His mother in a corset laced powder blue dress- at least, he assumed it was blue. He couldn't quite tell.

It was intricate and originally made by the royal outfitter, her face caked in makeup with a smile so fake it could be fools gold and eyes glaring at him with sharp daggers. His father stood beside her, eyes tired, stress-lines deep set in his face, and lips pressed in a thin line- the same stoic look he's had George's entire life.

Silently, he prayed for help. For someone to stop this and take him away. In all honesty, this was one of the many moments in his life where he'd welcome an assassination attempt.

George looked back to his bride-to-be, taking a deep breath and closing his eyes for a moment. He'd always wanted an adventure. He thought he'd be able to do that- sail the seas, go through trade ports, charm men and women everywhere- George really just wanted to enjoy life before becoming King. He could see it all- the rising tides, the crashing waves, sailing through siren infested territory just for the thrill, sitting in the crows nest watching the sun move through the sky as the hours ticked by...

'Guess I waited too long...' He thought to himself bitterly. He sighed and forced a smile, gazing

into Maia's sympathetic eyes. He knew he should stop feeling so sorry for himself. Maia was just as unwilling in this as he was.

Well, at least he wouldn't be spending the rest of his life with someone who was terrible.

"I..."

George glanced to the great hall's stained window, seeing a shadow outside getting closer. His eyes widened, recognizing the outline of a person coming closer. Shouting, he lunged forward and pulled Maia to him, back turning to the window.

"Look out!!"

The stained glass shattered and George used his body to shield the princess from the falling glass, screams of shock ringing out from the crowd.

There was the heavy thud of boots landing behind him and suddenly pain exploded in his scalp as a strong hand snagged him by his hair. The hand yanked him and he stumbled back, colliding into the owner of the hand. George began to struggle harder only to immediately stop as a cold blade was pressed to his throat, making his breath hitch.

"Well isn't this a lovely gathering!!" The person behind him declared, "A bit boring though, full of snot nosed royalty..." They scoffed, and as he tried to pull away again they tugged again- making him hiss in pain, "Which is why we thought we'd stop by and make this more entertaining!"

George's father stepped forward, anger on his features as the guards backed him up, "Unhand my son you scoundrel!!"

The person behind him let out bellowing laughter and George yelped as his head was yanked back to expose more of his neck, the sword pressing harder and making its ice cold metal bite more into his warm flesh.

"What? Pretty boy here?!" The man let out a cackle and George turned his head a bit to see the man holding him captive. He was a head taller than George, with messy unkempt blonde hair and wearing a wood mask that was painted white. He paused, seeming to be pretending to think before humming and softly chuckling, "Nah, I don't think I will. After all..." His voice took a purr like tone as the sword slowly slid across George's throat until only the tip pressed under his chin. "He looks fun...and it pisses you off so..." George yelped and squirmed as he was spun around, suddenly picked up and thrown over the man's shoulder, "Let me go!! What are you-" George cried out, "Somebody help me!!"

"I think we'll be taking him to go, right Sap?!"

Right on cue, George heard the church doors slam open. Shouts and screams filled the room along with the clashing of blades as suddenly the man dashed down the isle- making a beeline towards another man gesturing him from the door. The other man had on a black cloak, face hidden behind another mask. Manic laughter left his lips as his companion- George's captor- joined in on the hysterics. They sprinted out the door as George spotted the guards fighting people who had been freed from the dungeons and stormed the hall. They ran down the hall and out onto a balcony, where they slammed shut and locked the door behind them.

Seeing they were in the clear, George dropped the act and spiraled into a laughing fit as he was finally lowered to his feet, "O-oh my god-"

"Your acting was fucking brilliant holy shit!!" The other man laughed out as well and the brunette looked at him, watching him pull down the cloak's hood to reveal his friend, a young pirate named Sapnap.

"My acting?! You guys had me really scared for a second there!!"

"It was nothing~" George looked at his kidnapper, watching Dream slip his mask off as he hooked an arm around George's waist. George smiled genuinely for what felt like the first time in weeks, "Come here you amazing idiot!" He threw his arms around Dream's neck and hugged him tightly, the hug quickly reciprocated just as tightly with a chuckle, "It was nothing, really..."

"Uh- guys-"

They pulled apart and looked at Sap, "As nice as this is- I wanna celebrate too but we aren't out of harm's way just yet..." He climbed on the banister and unhooked a coil of rope from around his waist along with a large steel hook. The noirette swung it over his head before tossing and hooking it around a gargoyle statue. Tugging hard on it as a test, Sap hummed in approval as he took out a pair of gloves and slipped them on.

"Alright, you know how to rope swing right?"

"Ah...no..."

Dream seemed to pause at that before sighing, slipping his mask firmly into place along with a pair of thick leather gloves, "We'll have to do this then. Sapnap, you first. George, I'll carry you."

Sap nodded and without hesitation gripped the rope, jumping and disappearing off the balcony. Dream and George climbed the banister next and as Sap landed, Dream grabbed the rope tightly, holding out his opposite hand to George.

Mischief twinkled in his forest green eyes behind the mask, "Do you trust me?"

George snorted, taking his hand, "I wouldn't be here if I didn't, Dream."

"Fair enough," Dream shrugged, pulling the brunette against him and hooking his arm firmly around his waist, "Arms around my neck and hold on as best you can." George did as he was told and there was a pause as the door was slammed, the shouts of his father on the other side.

"Hey George?"

"What?"

George could feel Dream smirking behind the mask, "Say you love me." His face burned pink, eyes widening as he looked at the pirate in disbelief, "What?! Wha- no!!"

"C'mon, just say you love me and we'll go~"

"Dream!!" The door splintered and George began to panic, "It's so easy Georgie, just say you love me!~"

"Dream you are actually a jerk-!"

The door cracked and George held on tighter, his face bright pink and stomach full of butterflies as he shouted, "Fine! Guess what? I love you Dream!!"

With that the door slammed open and the blonde jumped, swinging down the rope and through the

air. He hollered and let out excited cheers, holding George tightly as the Prince's heart hammered in his ribcage. The wind whipped in his hair, eyes watering a bit as his stomach dropped in exhilarating fear.

It was everything he wanted.

They hit the ground and stumbled a bit before Dream hooked an arm under George's knees, carrying him bridal style as Sap beckoned them to hurry and Dream sprinted after him.

He shook in Dream's arms, both from excitement and terror.

This was it. He was really leaving it all behind- his family, his home, everything. He wasn't going to be Prince George Non Inventi anymore. He was just going to be George. He was going to sail the seas, he was going to live his life, he was going to be free.

The escape was oddly reminiscent of how he and Dream first met, only this time Dream was saving him instead. He buried his face in Dream's collar bone as the shouts of the guards began to fade away, face growing warm and stomach filling with butterflies once more.

The smell of saltwater and dead fish hit his nose and he realized they had made it to the docks. He spotted Dream's ship in the distance and he smiled widely. The guards were far behind them by now, and as the three of them reached the boat George knew it was final.

He was a freeman now. He was just George.

He was technically a traitor, but he didn't really care.

Dream put him down and ran off to help Sapnap, the sails coming down as the wind blew hard. By the time the guards reached the docks the ship was too far to stop them. George took the crown from his head and grinned, looking at the sparkling jewels.

"Hey Sap?" The noirette looked at him curiously, "You can go ahead and dismantle this, sell the pieces. I won't be needing it anymore~" He tossed the crown to Sap and went to remove his overcoat next, leaving him in his blue dress shirt as he tossed it to the ground. George ran his fingers through his neatly combed brown hair and ruffled it into a mess, hearing a laugh come from Sapnap, "Someones adapting real quick!" He quipped before going back to his task.

"Oh George~"

George looked at Dream, his tone sending shivers up his spine. The pirate captain took his hand and pulled him closer. He spun him once, the flicker of their memorable first meeting appearing in George's memory for a millisecond before disappearing as he stopped. When he looked to Dream again, the pirate was holding a rectangular brown box out to him, "I made you something as a wedding gift."

George took it and quirked a brow at Dream, looking at him skeptically.

"A wedding gift? Really?" Dream snorted, chuckling, "Look, you like it okay? Just open it." Rolling his eyes, George obeyed and opened the box.

Inside was a pair of circular blackened crystal lensed spectacles with white quartz frames. He took them out, eyes wide with amazement, "You told me you were red green colorblind so...I worked out a bit of magic on Crystal lens' and was able to make them so that when you look through them you'll see colors perfectly fine. It's not a permanent solution and they're kind of bulky but they ah...They worked on everyone I tested them on. They do the opposite to a regular person's eye though, make's them temporarily color blind."

"Fae can do that...?"

"Well, not all Fae. Crystal work and magic was just a family craft..."

George teared up a bit, heart skipping a beat, "Oh...Dream..." he smiled and put them on, looking at Dream. It didn't even feel like he was looking through a lens- everything perfectly crystal clear in image. The colors that had been wrong before now were the correct ones- At least he assumed they were.

"How do I look?" Dream slipped his mask off and his gaze softened, "Too cute for your own good." George's face flushed red before he snorted and rolled his eyes, "That's it, come here!"

He grabbed the front of Dream's coat and pulled him down into a kiss, reveling in the surprise from the other man. He pulled away and snickered at the redness in the blonde's cheeks.

Before he could process it, Dream pulled him into a tight hug and George slowly hugged back.

The boat rocked gently on the waves, a calming atmosphere taking them as they stood there.

George nuzzled his face into Dream's shoulder, voice a gentle murmur.

"I love you, Dream."

Dream pressed a soft kiss to George's forehead, "I love you too..."

The Unexpected Catch

Chapter Notes

Wow I'm seriously shocked about the attention and love this has received but god I'm so happy about it! Thank you!

As for this chapter, it's rather short but I promise the next one is going to be a lot longer. With that said- enjoy!

“Uh- Dream!!”

The fairy poked his head outside the captain's quarters, slightly annoyed, “What is it?”

Sapnap stood by the side of the boat with George, one of them grasping the rope to pull it and the other holding the top of the fishnet while seeming to be struggling, “There’s something caught in the net-” Sap grunted, tugging the rope again, “And its fighting a lot!!”

“Little help would be nice?!” George snapped, his boots starting to lose traction against the slippery deck. Dream rolled his eyes and ran over, grasping part of the net as he helped haul it over the side with ease, “Seriously, it's just a bunch of fish, the worst you get is a shark-”

A loud scream interrupted him and Dream’s eyes widened. A clawed hand reached and swung at the same time as a long scaly black tail whipped past him, long red spines flaring out and barely missing him by an inch. He jumped back as Sap hauled the net back into the air, the creature inside the net struggling wildly as its tail was uncomfortably sticking out from the net.

Dream shook, heart thundering in his chest and green eyes fixed on the creature. Glowing white eyes stared back at him, and all at once, he could sense the utter panic and fear coming from the creature. Feeling George and Sapnap’s eyes on him, he knew he had to make a decision. He was the Captain here, and whatever would happen next would be his call.

Dream took a deep breath, trying to calm his heart before deciding. He could drop the net back into the water and hope it wiggles it’s way out, or he could lower the net onto the deck and wait for the creature to calm down before freeing it.

His mind sensibly told him to just have the net dropped back in the water. But deep down a gut feeling told the second option would be better.

Well, his gut hadn’t failed him yet...

“Lower the net on the deck.”

“What?! Dream are you crazy?!”

“I said Lower it!!”

Sap swallowed, shaking his head in silent disagreement of his Captain's decision before slowly lowering the net. As soon as it touched the deck, the creature tore it off its upper torso, scrambling to free its tail next. The moment it was free it locked its gaze with Sapnap, the both of them freezing in a silent standoff. Dream gestured for his crewmates to back up- Sapnap never taking his eyes off the creature- as he slowly gathered his wits, his eyes scanning the creature.

It was a male siren, that much was obvious- only to his surprise he didn’t seem to be trying to use his voice. He had dark grey skin and a tail as black as coal with shimmering red designs. Large red spines flared out from it and the way they glistened from an oily substance immediately screamed that they excreted some sort of toxin. His torso was almost feminine, but then again looking fairly ambiguous in bodily shape seemed to be a trend with male siren’s. His eyes were wide, almost doe-

like and a bright glowing white, long raven locks falling in his face and past his shoulders, sticking to his skin and-

Dream paused.

Dark red blood gushed from a wound in the Siren's shoulder, seeming to be from a bullet. It looked irritated and painful, the skin around it swollen and red- visually telling them it was in serious need of treatment.

"George, get some blankets. Sap, I need a med-kit."

Without a word, the brunette stood and ran off. George wasn't one to normally question his boyfriend- after all, the fairy knew more about these things than he did. Dream kneeled, holding his hands up to show his lack of weapons, "Hey..."

The Sirens head snapped to him, eyes full of alarm and terror. The break of eye contact finally allowed for Sapnap to come to his senses, and he bolted to get a med-kit.

Dream's voice softened as he reached to move his mask to the side of his head, "Hey, we're not gonna hurt you...okay?" The Siren curled in on himself more, still seeming untrustworthy of Dream as it slowly shook its head. The blonde sighed, eyeing the wound that only seemed to get worse by the minute, "You're hurt, right? We can help- but you've gotta let us..." The siren's eyes scanned Dream, his body trembling.

"Y-you promise...?" Its voice was hoarse and full of pain, yet still held a soft and light tone that sounded slightly melodic to Dream's ears. The fairy smiled, nodding, "I promise..."

Slowly, the siren relaxed. The spines flattened against his tail and body as tears filled his eyes. Dream edged forward, holding his hands out, "That's it..." The Siren nervously reached back, a clawed hand slipping into Dreams. Dream slowly gripped around it and reached his opposite hand up, "See? I'm not gonna hurt you..." The siren leaned forward as it relaxed and Dream cupped his cheek, letting out a shaky sigh of relief followed by a soft sob. The fairy pulled the siren closer to his chest as George arrived with the blankets, cautiously kneeling beside them and draping the soft material over the siren's shoulders.

George spoke up, tone soft and quiet, "Do you have a name? Something we can call you?"

The siren hesitated before speaking cautiously, swallowing thickly.

"B-Bad...my name is Bad..."

It had been several days since Bad had been pulled aboard, but the young siren had quickly made himself right at home. They had to extract the bullet- a process insanely painful for Bad- but after they did the wound finally began to close up and heal. The 3 of them watched over the Siren in shifts when he was healing, and over time the crew had learned quite a few things about him.

First of all, He wasn't really fully Siren. His mother had been a Mermaid, while his father was a Siren. It was fairly confusing, but he simply had grown to have a mixed appearance of a Siren, but most of the abilities of Mermaids. That explained to Dream why he wasn't with a choir that likely would have torn the net to shreds and crashed their ship in the process.

Secondly, the bullet was from being shot by the Navy. He was captured for a while but was saved by someone close to his captor who helped him escape- it had only been an accident in the getaway in which he was shot. However, when Dream made a comment about his captor being scum, Bad was quick to come to his captor's defense. He insisted on harboring no ill will to the man, insisting

he was not a bad person- but strangely gave no reason as to why he believed this.

Third of all, He seemed to be a good cook and was decent at working with fabrics- having repaired a few of the ripped sails and outfits they had. It easily gave him something fun to do around the ship.

Finally, due to his mermaid half, Bad could shift to his human form at will. His human form was...a lot more delicate looking than his siren form. His hair remained the same- ivory black down to his hips- with snow white skin and vibrant green eyes. This form made it easier for him to work around the boat, but it meant he had to borrow the others' clothes quite a bit. Which was awkward since he was 5'2, making the rest of the crew's clothes big on him. But, they simply made do until they could get to the next port for re-supply.

As the days passed, Bad had slowly grown attached to the crew. For the first time in forever, he was willingly around people who wanted him around in return. He didn't fear for his life at every turn, having to constantly have his guard up- a nice change from life in the ocean. So, even after the wound in his shoulder fully healed, Bad stuck around. It was like a fresh start for his life, and it was one he didn't intend to waste.

As for the crew, they were happy to have someone new in the group. Someone new meant more hands on deck, and it wasn't like Bad was unpleasant to have around. The young siren was sweet. He wasn't arrogant, or rude, or unpleasant in any manner- he was playful, a bit silly, slightly motherly, and caring.

Overall, they grew attached to him, none of them opposed to his extended stay.

Dream's eyes flickered to his crewmates. His arm draped around George's shoulders as the brunette curled into his side while Sap's head rested in his lap. Bad curled against George, a blanket draped over him since he got cold easily. The sight was something that made a warm feeling spread in the blonde's chest. For a moment, he silently wondered.

This crew was still young. Someone new after this was inevitable, really.

So who was going to be next?

The God swept away the vision in the orb, a smirk stretching across his lips.

“This seems interesting enough~”

He grabbed his red cloak from where it was draped, slipping it over his shoulders. With a snap, he was in a sleepy fishing port, groaning as he stretched out his human form.

His fingers threaded through pink locks, humming softly as red eyes fixed on the moon. Grinning, he muttered to himself.

“They should be here by dawn. I've got time to kill...” He glanced at a nearby tavern, bustling with people as they yelled and drunkenly sang. He drew his sword, chuckling as he looked at his reflection, “It's been a while since i've had a good feeding, why the hell not?” Sheathing his sword back into his hold, he hummed and started towards the Tavern, “Mortals in there are seething with anger anyway- What's a little push~”

Blood for the Blood God

Chapter Notes

Another chapter so soon? I had a lot of inspiration today and had a good idea what I wanted to do + lots of time and my already pre-written bits! I promised this chapter would be a lot longer than the previous one, so here you go!!
Now I'm stating this: You see the "Graphic violence" tag? It's from this point forward that this becomes very relevant so be warned!!!
As always, Enjoy.

A glass smashed to the ground the moment he stepped through the door, everyone stopping as his eyes roved over the crowd. Old sailors, young navy men, pirates, merchants, farmers, young and old ladies alike froze under his gaze, unable to move even if they tried. Taking in the crowd, he let out a satisfied hum before giving a wave of his hand and heading to the bar.

Just like that the crowd was back in motion as if nothing had happened. He took a seat at the bar and took a shilling from his belt, slamming it on the table to get the bartender's attention. The burly man looked at him and he spoke firmly, "Your largest pint of rum, please."

The bartender looked him up and down before sneering critically, "You sure you can handle it pretty boy? Ya look more like the fancy wine type--"

"I can handle myself just fine." he snapped, narrowing his eyes and cutting the bartender's mocking off. The bartender rolled his eyes, "Lily, get the man a large mug of Rum!" He shouted.

The small barmaid beside him jumped in surprise before springing into action.

'Humans, so quick to judge...' He thought scornfully. The young woman slid him the mug with a nervous smile and he found himself returning the expression, "Thank you. Lily, right?"

The barmaid looked surprised, a faint dust of pink decorating her cheeks, "Yes- and you?"

The God considered it for a second before finally shrugging. She was a sweet girl, might as well give his name to one of the few people he'd spare in this shithole.

"Techno," he sipped the rum, sighing at the slight burn it left as it slipped down his throat, "Why are you here, Lily?"

Again, she looked surprised, the blush on her cheeks growing a bit more.

'Poor girl. So easy swooned by a stranger's simple interest.'

"My father owes a hefty tab here. I'm working to help him repay it..." Techno nodded slightly, it was a noble cause- one he could admire, "How much do you owe?"

"Why do you want to know?" Techno snickered, 'So she does have some bite.' He thought again before looking at her, "Tell me Lily, do you believe in the Human Gods? Xisuma...Amusix...Keralis?" At this, the young woman looked to be more unsettled, "W-well...yes?"

“Then I want you to do something for me.” He took an old, empty leather pouch from his belt and handed it to her, leaning in and lowering his voice.

“Take this pouch. Tonight, I want you to roast a pig. You can eat the body, but put the bloody heart in the pouch. Drop a few gold nuggets in it along with a lock of your hair, then add a few droplets of your own blood. Make sure your father is asleep before hiding the pouch somewhere in your backyard, then go back inside and shut all the curtains.” His eyes remained locked with Lily’s as he could smell fear radiating off her, spurring him on. It had been too long since he had smelled such raw fear, “State your name out loud and then what your troubles are. Then, count to 400. Don't look outside, no matter what you hear or how badly curiosity tugs at you. When you're done and it's silent outside, go and retrieve the pouch. Do all this correctly, and I promise you this,” He stood up and leaned further in, breath hitting her ear, “You’ll get all the money you need to pay off your father's debt and so much more...Do you understand?”

There was a soft noise that escaped her before she nodded quickly.

“Good. Now... **run** .”

As if on cue, there was a shout and a slam as a fight broke out. Lily stepped back and ran out of the bar, clutching the pouch. Techno groaned, eyes flashing with malice. The anger of the two drunkards fighting hit him full force and he drew his sword, rolling his neck to crack it.

“Now...” He downed his rum quickly before smashing the glass on the floor and climbing on the counter, shouting at the crowd, “Let's make this more interesting!!!” He stamped his foot and just like that the atmosphere in the room shifted. Overwhelming rage and bloodthirst filled the patrons and workers of the Tavern and soon enough screams filled the room. They tore and scratched at each other in pure anger, eyes full of fury and fire.

Instantly, Techno felt like a young God again. Fuck, he needed to do this more. To hell with what Xisuma said, Mortals might have been his and Amu’s creations, but humans were practically bred for the rage and blood shed Techno lived for. They didn't know how to go even a decade before going to war, and how easily a simple wave of thought made the entire crowd turn on each other just proved that.

Would this get him in trouble? Probably.

But as he sensed the first drops of blood hitting the floor, Techno found it in himself unable to care- hopping down and joining the chaos.

There's the sound of water hitting the side of the boat and wood creaking around him. It was nauseating- feeling the boat rock back and forth as it was tossed by the careless waves. He felt all his senses heightening, leaving him overwhelmed. The cold iron clamp around his ankle felt like ice against his skin, the soft mattress like quick sand and strands of long, damp hair leaving a tingly, stinging sensation on his skin.

*His eyelids were heavy, his body trembling and breath ragged as he struggled to remain conscious. Something was wrong with him- so, so, **terribly wrong**...*

He just didn't know what.

His eyelids were heavy, his body trembling and breath ragged as he struggled to remain conscious.

The door squeaked as it opened, swift footsteps striding into the room. A heavily accented voice ranted, “-With all do respect, this process takes time. Time that you need to give him alone-!”

“I have given him time alone! Days in fact! But I want to see my pearl!!” A loud voice snapped, the noise piercing his ears and making them ring. He whined loudly and the accented voice shushed the loud voice, “Quiet!! He's still incredibly sensitive!”

He felt a presence behind him and a gentle hand stroked his cheek. The loud voice spoke again, only more hushed now, “Is...there really nothing I can do to help? I...” They took a deep breath, “I don't like seeing him in pain like this...”

*Another pair of footsteps sounded in the room, “You **could** let him free.” A third voice spoke, sounding male but having a distinctly feminine tone, “It would end the process entirely and instantly and-”*

“No. No way in hell- he's mine.” the loud voice stated firmly, as if his word was final. The third voice however seemed undeterred, “Consider it, he's not an animal and he's not property! He has the right to freedom, not to be held captive and put on display for your eyes only like your personal trophy!”

“Excuse me?! He- he's not captive or a trophy, he's happy here- with me! A6d, tell him! He is happy here!”

*The accented voice, A6d, spoke again, “I'm sorry but...I agree with Finn. He's **clearly** quite scared of us and unhappy- I mean, you have him chained to the bed because he kept running-”*

“Wha- you two-” the loud voice stammered and sputtered before growling, screaming in frustration.

“Get out!! Both of you!”

He cried out in pain as the voice pierced his eardrums and he covered them, curling into a fetal position as tears pricked his eyes. 2 pairs of steps rushed out and the door slammed shut as he sobbed.

There were several moments of silence as his ears rang and head throbbed in pain.

A quiet sob sounded and footsteps approached him, walking around to his side of the bed.

*“You...you're happy here...You love it here-” They muttered under their breath. Their tone sounded like they were only trying to convince themselves, “You're happy with **me** -” The person crawled in the bed, laying beside him. They brushed his bangs from his eyes before resting a warm hand on his cheek. He cracked his eyes open and through blurred vision he took in the person's appearance.*

A young male with messy, disheveled hair black as a ravens feather, eyes as blue as the sky, tan skin, a shaky smile, and face streaked with tears. He swept away a stray tear, “You love me, right Bad? A-and you're happy here, with me...? Right...?” He sounded desperate, like he was begging. The name slipped from his lips before he could stop it, his own voice hoarse.

“S-Skeppy...?”

"Please...please say Yes..."

"I-i...I..."

Bad woke with a start, gasping sharply as he shot up. His face felt wet with tears- like he'd been crying- and his head ached painfully.

He jumped as there was a soft knock at the door, "Hey Bad? We're approaching the port, so get ready!" Sapph's voice was a blessing to the Sirens' ears as he let out a sigh of relief.

'Just...just a dream...'

He put his hand over his heart, feeling it thundering in his chest before he quickly called out, "Alright, give me a moment!"

As he stepped out of his room he took a deep breath of fresh air, smiling. The boat had just docked that dawn and the sounds of the busy crowds excited him, rocking on his feet as he waited for the bridging plank to be lowered. He was watching Sapph start setting it up when a hand touched his arm, getting his attention. Bad looked to see Dream, curious as the blonde slipped on his mask-

Why exactly did he wear that? He wasn't exactly unattractive and he didn't seem to find the thing comfortable. It looked old, made of birch wood and painted white with eyes and a smile cut into it, but the paint was peeling and the wood was chipped- it really couldn't have felt good against his skin...

Before he could question it, the other male spoke up, "Bad, have you been at a port or market before?"

The siren paused, thinking to himself. Far in the past, when he was 11- maybe 12- he remembered running through ports and markets...but he barely remembered much about what it was like. Other than that, He'd seen ports before, but only through the porthole of his room while captured, and even then it was barely glimpsed. He shook his head and Dream hummed, "Alright well- I want to give you something. You aren't exactly the...scariest or most intimidating person," The blonde gestured to Bad and the young siren huffed, rolling his eyes, "So you need to keep this with you just in case." Dream held out a leather belt with a dagger sheath attached, along with a crystalline looking dagger.

It glittered under the bright sun, having a glowing green shine to it and a bronze hilt carved like wood wrapped in a red cloth. He gapped, "Did you make this?"

"Yep, same way I made George's glasses."

"Woah..."

Dream shrugged, stepped forward to wrap the belt around Bad's waist, "It's not a big deal- just a family talent and trade, y'know..." The blonde hummed, "Actually, that dagger is the first thing I ever made out of crystal so my name might be carved into it still- When we're back at sea I'll engrave it again with your name instead." He ranted slightly and Bad tore his gaze from the dagger, looking at the older male as he fastened the belt tightly around the siren's waist and stepped back, "Now, you do know how to fight with a dagger right? Or at least defend yourself?"

Bad blanked.

He didn't- he never even held a dagger before. Yet, something in the way Dream looked at him- like he expected a no- forced the answer out of Bad quicker than he meant to.

"Of course I do! I'm not *completely* helpless!"

Dream, while looking pleasantly surprised, snickered, "I never said you were, but alright," Bad saw Dream's eyes soften behind the mask as the taller male grabbed his shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze, "Just...be careful okay? You remember what you discussed with George right?"

Bad bit the inside of his cheek. This was one of the few things that annoyed him about Dream, George, and Sap. He was around the same age as them, yet they treated him like a baby and it was irritating. Yes, he knew they were just looking after his well-being- after all he spent most of his life in the deep open ocean, not the land or anything remotely close to it- but now this was becoming a hassle.

"Don't stray too far from the docks, don't let my guard down, suspect everyone, be back at the boat before sunset and stay away from navy officers." He recited quickly with an annoyed expression.

"Good." Dream paused, seeming to take in his look as he took out a small pouch of coins and put it in Bad's free hand before speaking, "Bad, I know this is annoying- but you have to understand. Your species? It's high on the market and we just don't want to risk you being captured again. You've got to promise you'll *please* be careful and follow our advice out there..."

Bad took a deep breath, sighing with a gentle smile, "Alright...I promise."

Dream stopped again, staring at Bad for a second before he was called by George.

"Oh Dream~ Last to the market has to pay for the first round of drinks later!!!"

Dream snapped his head towards the Prince with a sputter, already seeing him and Sap sprinting to the market, "Wha- No fair!!" He laughed before taking off after them, leaving Bad by himself.

The siren looked at the coin purse in his hand as he sheathed the crystal dagger in its hilt. He felt a little bit guilty for lying to Dream about knowing how to use the weapon, but then again was he really going to need it?

All he had to do was find a clothing shop or stall and buy himself some properly fitting stuff to wear and after that he could look around as he pleased. Seemed simple enough, so he doubted he'd ever need it.

He was wrong. Very, very wrong.

Turns out finding a clothing stall or shop with outfits that fit someone of his stature without it being a dress was actually quite difficult, and on top of that the town seemed to be a lot more of a maze than he thought it would be.

As Bad hit another dead end, he groaned in frustration. What street was he on now? They all just

seemed to meld together by this point. Had he passed that chicken pen before? That butcher shop had seemed familiar- or did it? Bad whined softly, rubbing his eyes as he reached and played with the stray pieces of long black hair that hung in front of his face in an attempt to focus.

“Are you lost?” A deep, almost monotone voice spoke and Bad jumped, turning to look at the owner of the voice. His forest green eyes met blood red and he stepped back cautiously, hand going to the dagger at his waist. The stranger's eyes flickered to the dagger and he gave an amused chuckle, “Relax, I'm not going to hurt you.”

Unconvinced, Bad dug his heels into the ground as he felt cornered and small under the man's gaze. Paranoid thoughts filled his mind, making his stomach sink.

He was out of his element. His entire life he'd been able to just swim away or use his natural defenses to protect himself. His voice, his tail, his claws and spikes, everything. But in his human form, he was small, weak, and vulnerable. He had no defense at all against this man- dammit, why did he lie about knowing how to use the dagger? Dream wouldn't have minded teaching him if he had just asked!

Rapidly, he took in the stranger's form. Over 6ft, long pink hair tied over his broad shoulders, skin unnaturally pale, strong arms and sturdy form, blood red eyes...

He wore a gold circlet and was clean cut like a noble, wearing an elegant red velvet cape and a silk red vest over a white dress shirt- tied together by black riding pants with the cuffs tucked into black boots. A sharp broad sword that was attached to his hip glinted in the sunlight and man's hand wrapped around the hilt, a boastful smirk stretching across his face.

As his eyes narrowed on Bad, the grip around his sword handle tightening as if he was going to unsheath it, making the Sirens heart leap into his throat as a flinched back.

The man snorted and rolled his eyes, hand leaving the hilt, “Your quite the jumpy one, huh? I can smell the fear rolling off you...”

He stepped forward and Bad jolted, unsheathing the dagger to strike the stranger. Without warning, the man caught his wrist and squeezed slightly painfully, making Bad yelp as he dropped the dagger.

The man caught it and tisked, shaking his head, "Real smart." He inspected the dagger, "Crystal huh? Could've done some real damage with this- granted, you would've just pissed me off rather than kill me but still." Bad struggled, starting to kick now, "Let go!!"

"Will-do, just one second-" There was a pause, as if the man recognized something.

He let Bad go and turned to him, his once amused expression now hardened, "Where did you get this dagger."

Bad shrunk back. The look on the man's face was unreadable and it unnerved him. Something deep down told him he couldn't lie or avoid this question, "M-my friend gifted it to me..."

"Hm..."

The man was quiet for a few moments before he huffed and flipped the blade around, handing it back to the siren, "I'll ask you one more time. Are you lost?"

Bad looked between the man and the dagger, reaching for it cautiously. When the man didn't move, Bad snatched it back and averted his eyes, "Yes..."

"Where are you going? Maybe I could help?"

Bad looked at the stranger in surprise, looking at him suspiciously, "Why? I don't know you at all..."

The man shrugged, "I'm bored. Do you want my help or not?"

Blinking a few times, Bad sighed and gave in, "Yes please- but I want your name first."

The man smirked, stepping forward, "You can call me Techno..." Without Bad even realizing, Techno took a lock of his black hair between his fingers and hummed, "And what can I call you, *little fish*?"

Bad froze, eyes widening.

There was no way this stranger knew. It had to be a coincidence- that was it.

He swallowed a lump in his throat and took a deep breath, "Bad. And don't call me that, please..." Techno snorted and rolled his eyes, letting go and stepping back, "Well Bad, care to tell me where you're headed?"

Despite their rocky start, Techno had proved to be good company. While he was a bit scary at times, it turned out he was rather tame and had plenty of good stories. Stories that Bad liked listening to as Techno guided him around and got his clothes before walking around the town and market. He'd gotten a chocolate muffin at some point too- one that he admits he almost cried over how good it was.

However, as the sun set and moon had risen Bad had barely noticed. So when they reached the docks, he finally realized his mistake.

"Bad!!" He heard Dream's voice snap and he turned to it quickly. Before he could process it, he was yanked away from Techno and there was the shrill scrape of metal. He stumbled back into George with a yelp and immediately the brunette began checking him for injuries.

Quickly, he squirmed free and was shocked to see Techno and Dream holding their swords to each other's throats. While Dream's expression was unreadable behind his mask, Techno had a look alike to feeling mildly inconvenienced.

"Dream, what a pleasant surprise-"

"Shove it, piggy." Dream snapped and Bad shivered. He had never heard such resentment in the captain's voice, and to hear it for the first time made his gut twist in fear, "Why are you here?"

"Simple; your low on crew mates and need more hands on deck, so I've come to offer my services."

"Bullshit- it's always something more with you. And what makes you think I want you anywhere near my crew- much less as a part of it?"

Techno tisked, chuckling, "What? Can't a man be bored? And plus, I think you know exactly why you'll let me join you."

The two held eye contact for several moments, nobody wanting to move and risk breaking the tension.

The sword in Dream's hand shook and he growled softly, lowering his sword and sheathing it, "Fine. But if you do anything to hurt any of them-" He gestured to George, Bad, and Sap, who stared in shock, "I swear, Immortal or not, I will **castrate** your sorry ass..." Dream growled out, voice dead serious before turning and storming back to the boat, gripping the hilt of his sword so tightly his knuckles were turning white.

Sap muttered a curse under his breath before running after Dream, Techno casually striding behind them with a satisfied smirk.

George and Bad stood in place, shocked.

"I...This is my fault, isn't it?" Bad whispered, and George shook his head. If he knew anything about Dream, it's that the fairy preferred to keep his secrets. His past was a mystery to the rest of them, so Bad couldn't have possibly known.

He just wished he was a bit more open though, as now even George was curious as to why Dream reacted the way he did. It was no use to push now though, so he just simply wrapped an arm around Bads shoulders and smiled, "He'll get over it, I promise. Let's go make sure your new clothes fit now, alright?"

"I...guess..."

Some things are better left in the past

Chapter Notes

Finished refining another chapter! The love this is receiving really is making me cry y'all. I'm so freaking happy people like this...
With that being said, this chapter jumps right into the graphic violence warning again so be warned, and enjoy <3

The memory was horribly fresh in his mind despite how long ago it was and how much Dream wanted to forget it.

The iron blade was hovering just inches from the back of his neck, his scalp burning as they pulled his long hair roughly. There were a dozen eyes on him, but all he could sense were the holes his mother and father burnt into him, full of shame and distaste towards their failure of a son.

His body shook and ached, his heart squeezing as he willed it not to break. Mentally, Dream was scolding himself. He felt like a damn child when he heard his sentence; wanting to scream and cry and beg for their mercy, their forgiveness. He wanted to promise he'd be good, promise never to open his mouth again, promise to do as they'd tell him from now on...

But he knew it wouldn't matter. He might have been their son, but in their eyes he was replaceable. They didn't care- they never cared, and he was just too blind to see it.

So Dream was stubborn. Even as his impending doom loomed over him- his wings and arms tied to his back, body beaten and bruised, having been tortured for days...He stared right back at his parents with defiance.

Secretly, as he stared back into his father's glare, he searched. He searched and hoped that somewhere in those cold, angry eyes he would find some hint of remorse. Some hint that he cared even the slightest bit...

But it was nothing but false hope, as his father nodded to the guards.

Dreams knew this was it. This was the moment he had mentally prepared for days and nights. He thought he could handle it. Thought he could bite back the screams and the tears, not giving them the satisfaction of his suffering.

The smell of smoke hits his nose as the iron knife slices through his hair, singeing the ends and making sure it would never grow past that point ever again. A mental blow. A symbol among his species signally you've been disowned by all of fae-kind for the rest of your life. That you were unwelcome and hated...

But that wasn't what he was waiting for. It was what was after his hair.

The sword is brought down next and ever so slowly his wings are hacked away from his back, taking some blood, skin, and even some muscle tissue with them.

His back is burning with a pain he's never felt before and the screams are ripping themselves from his throat before he can stop them- actually, he can barely register his own screams until his

throat starts flaring with pain. He's struggling as he pleas for them to stop or just kill him, but he knows his cries of pain are falling on deaf ears.

There's a soft thud, and all Dream can do is cry as the searing hot blood flows down his back. His once magnificent emerald wings laying limp, bloody, and draining of color on the floor along with the lengths of long blonde hair cut from his head.

His heart shudders as the muscles in his back that once controlled his wings twitched and pulsed, trying to flex and flap appendages that were no longer there. His empty stomach twisted as he felt the blood pooling under him- sticky and warm. It lurched and punched up his throat in an attempt to puke, dry heaving as he trembled.

His eyes focused on the blood as he grew dizzy and light-headed. It was a dark red- almost like squid ink as it smeared and stained his skin. It was a color that, as it amassed under him in a morbid puddle, he knew he would never forget the sight of.

The edges of his vision grew dark as he was grabbed by his arms and dragged off to the forest, the world around him blurring. He could tell as his body grew colder that he was losing too much blood.

So he briefly wondered- Is this how he would die? Disowned, bearing the marks of shame, and stripped of his title? Bleeding out on the cold forest floor with nobody around that would care enough to bury his body? To give him a proper burial? To cry over him?

...

He was dropped on the dirt ground, barely conscious. His blood was mixing with the dirt as he laid limp, unwilling to fight any longer. He was so, so exhausted. He wanted sleep, even if just a wink. His body hurt so much, he'd fought so hard, he was starving and dehydrated...he deserved just a little bit of sleep.

Just a little bit, to stop the pain for a second...

"Dream...?"

Just...sleep...

"Dream..."

Ignore the voice, just-

"Dream!!"

His eyes snapped open and he could see a figure on top of him in the dark room, but he couldn't make out features in his panic. They grasped his shoulders, shaking him awake. His heart was racing, the adrenaline pumping through his system making him act faster than he could register. Reaching, he grabbed the person by their shoulders and pushed them down beside him, rolling over on top of them. His instincts were in full control and the person yelped in pain as he kept a rough grip on their shoulders, digging his nails into soft flesh as their hands scrambled to hit his chest.

He couldn't think, breathing shakily while the scars on his back burned as if they were fresh. All his mind screamed was danger as he pinned the person down under him.

A voice spoke up, strangled but soft.

"Dream- Dream calm down!"

Why was that voice so familiar...?

"Dream it's me, please- just- take deep breaths for me-"

Unconsciously he followed the order, inhaling deeply as he tried to pace his breaths. Slowly, his ears centered on the sound of water and creaking of wood. Was he on a boat?

His eyes darted elsewhere around the room, adjusting to the darkness. It was the captain's quarters. His room. He wasn't in the forest. The pain on his back dulled a bit at the realization but still simmered.

Of course he was, it had been so, so many years since that had happened.

But if he was in his room...

"D-Dream...?"

He looked to the empty side of the bed.

Where was...?

"Dream look at me..."

There was a soft hand on his cheek and for the first time, he became aware of the cold wetness there. Had he been crying?

He turned a wide-eyed gaze at the figure under him and finally he could really see the person.

His breath hitched as it dawned on him, heart-squeezing as he took in disheveled brown hair and blue eyes. Dream let go and scrambled away from George, covering his mouth as his back hit the wall by the bed. The other male sat up and the shirt slipped down his shoulders. Even in the dark Dream could see the angry red marks his nails had left there, and more tears slipped down his face as guilt twisted his gut.

He had hurt him.

He hurt George.

God, he thought he'd finally gotten rid of the night terrors- thought he was finally okay now. It had been so long since he had one this bad and because of it, he hurt George.

"I'm s-sorry-" His voice cracked, sounding broken as he whimpered. The brunette felt his heartache at how distressed Dream was. Sap had told him about these episodes Dream would have, but he never knew it could be this bad.

"Hey- hey hey hey..." George leaned forward and reached out to him, putting a hand on his knee, "Dream..."

The fairy shook his head rapidly, curling up and pressing further back into the wall as fresh tears slipped down his face, "Oh Amu- fuck I- I hurt you- I'm so sorry-"

"It's alright Dream, you didn't mean to...I'm not upset with you, I'm fine..."

"No it's not-"

George leaned forward, arms wrapping around Dreams neck as he hugged him tightly, "It is, Dream..."

The fairy hesitated for a moment before slowly slipping his arms around the Prince's middle, pulled him against him as he buried his face in his shoulder and cried.

He held George like he felt he'd disappear, mumbling a muffled, jumbled mess of words that consisted of "Sorry" and "Don't deserve you" as George shushed him, a hand going to thread through Dreams hair. For several minutes, the pair stayed like this in the dark, one comforting the other.

Slowly, Dream calmed down and his grip loosened, allowing George to adjust himself so that he laid against the blonde's chest.

"Feel a bit better now?" George asked quietly.

"A bit..." Dream mumbled, voice low and hoarse from crying. He silently hoped no one below deck had heard what had happened- he'd hate to have been the cause of Sap or Bad losing sleep.

"Do you wanna talk about it...?"

Without hesitation, Dream muttered, "No...just...not really..." George nodded, and just like that the subject was dropped and Dream was left to his thoughts.

He really had thought he was past these episodes, but it seemed they had come back. He wondered to himself if it had anything to do with Techno showing up.

Seeing him- talking to him...it had been so surreal. Dream had half expected the God to disappear the moment he blinked, but no, he hadn't.

He wished he did.

He remembered something burning inside him when he saw Techno with Bad. What was that? Anger? Fear? Sadness?

Maybe Jealousy...?

No. Maybe he was just too protective of the Siren and extremely wary of Techno. He had every reason to be after all.

After all the God had done, he couldn't believe he had the audacity to just- show up! Out of nowhere, too! He-

Dream shook his head lazily, pulling himself from his thoughts. Now wasn't the time to dwell on it, he could think about it later.

His eyes flickered to George's shoulders, seeing the nail marks having started to fade. He hummed and leaned forward, pulling the brunette up a bit so he could press his lips to the mark. He pressed soft, lazy kisses on the marks, making George snort and chuckle.

Tiredly, he spoke up, "What're you doing?"

"Kissin' it better." Dream responded like it was obvious, and George laughed, "You are such a kid sometimes..."

Dream felt a smile tugging his lips as he pulled back, feeling like his normal self again, "Yea? Well, you're the one dating me, so I'd say you love me despite it."

George rolled his eyes, snuggling against the fairy as he yawned, "Maybe just a little bit..."

Dream felt his heart skip at that, feeling the prince relax slowly relax as he fell asleep. He let out a soft sigh, eyelids getting heavy as well. The pain in his back had ebbed, and now it felt as it was supposed to: simply a memory. A scar.

And that's all it would be.

Drip. Drip. Drip .

Water leaked from the ceiling of the cell, his eyes following each drop. The air was freezing around him, making him shiver as his teeth chattered a bit. He pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose, taking shaky breaths.

There was the soft tapping of footsteps approaching the cell, but it wasn't like he cared. It was probably just the guards coming to pester him again, so why bother. It didn't matter.

The footsteps stopped in front of his cell as he suspected, but he wasn't expecting the silence. He ignored it for a few moments, but eventually, he couldn't help his morbid curiosity anymore.

His orange eyes flickered over to the person and he snorted in surprise.

"Skeppy. What a delightful **fucking** surprise." The other man's blue eyes bore into him, looking like he didn't want to be here either. He sneered, "It's been a while, how are you?" His voice was laced with sarcasm, burning a bit inside at the sight of the other man. He couldn't believe this asshole really had the nerve to show his face to him.

"I need your help-"

"You need my help?!" He snapped, standing up and looking at Skeppy in disbelief. He let out a huff of a laugh, "You think after 2 fucking years- After not even visiting me all this time- you can just walk in here and ask for my **help???**"

There was silence, and Skeppy faltered, heart-squeezing. Maybe this hadn't been such a good idea. Of course, he was still angry with him- Oh Amusix, he really should have visited- or he shouldn't have come at all...

But he needed him. He was the only one who could help with this.

"Skep, you cannot be this stupid!"

"Please just- just hear me out?"

There was a pause. His tone was strained and he sounded desperate.

He sighed, narrowing his eyes on Skeppy as he crossed his arms, "Fine. But this better be good."

Skeppy took a deep breath, "I need help finding someone- Someone important to me...You're the only person I know who can track him down." He quirked a brow.

"How so?"

"Any way you can. Tracking, spying- fuck, hunt him down if you want but I want him back alive and in one piece!!"

Now Skeppy had his interest.

"You have a sketch?" Skeppy nodded, taking a paper from his pocket and handing it over.

He snatched it from his hands and unfolded it, looking. The person looked like a cute boy with long straight hair. There was little notes to the side, black hair, green eyes, fair skin...

"Why do you wanna find him?"

"That's none of your business." The other man snapped, and he rolled his eyes, "Fine. But what's in it for me."

Skeppys eyes darkened a bit, "Simple. Your execution date is in 2 weeks. If you agree to do this, I can order them to lift it. And if you're successful, I can give you enough money to live comfortably for the rest of your life."

He blinked, surprised.

"but if you don't..." Skeppys hand grabbed the front of his shirt and pulled him against the bars, "then by midday tomorrow, your neck will be stretched at the gallows with the pull of a lever."

He grabbed Skeppy's wrist and forced him to let go of his shirt, growling a bit. There was silence again, until slowly he began to laugh, a smirk stretching across his lips, "Oh, I'm soooo scared..."

Skeppy grinned, silently thanking the gods that he still remembered his humor after so long. The name was right on the tip of his tongue as he held a hand through the bars.

"So, do we have a deal...Spifey?"

Spifey grinned, grabbing his hand and shaking it, eyes reflecting red in the lighting, "Skep, you crazy bastard- Of fucking course."

Too Close for Comfort

Chapter Summary

Bad's forgetfulness leads to a nearly lethal situation with Sapnap, Sapnap is just being soft, and we see a bit more of Skeppy, Spifey, Finn, and A6d.

At the crack of dawn, Bad was up and moving. He was always the first person up, wanting to start cooking while the others were still asleep.

He crept from his room to the kitchen, washing his hands before beginning to prepare the meal. He sang as he worked and his soft voice drifted through the halls, reaching the ears of a certain crewmate.

Sapnap sat up groggily, short hair a tousled mess as his ears focused on the melodic voice. Almost as if hypnotized, he crawled from bed and stumbled to the kitchen. He braced himself against the doorway and his eyes searched the room until they met the owner of the voice.

Bad stood by the stove in his own little world as he cooked, the simmering of the fish in the pan accompanying him.

Bad stopped as he heard the floorboards creak, turning to see his crewmate leaning against the door. He felt heat rise to his cheeks when he saw the cloudy look in his eyes that started to dissipate and the state of dress he was in. The noirette only wore ripped shorts, the absence of his bandanna letting his bangs hang over his eyes as his hair was a mess.

The pupils of his eyes were expanded larger than a normal humans as his gaze fell on Bad, lips parted slightly.

Bads stomach churned, his feeding instincts almost kicking up at the sight of the disheveled man, continuing to sing against his own will. His own head started to cloud as Sap stumbled closer, a fumble of feet almost causing him to fall right into Bad as he braced his hands on the counter behind him.

The siren's voice hitched as he felt the warmth of Saps body right against his, all too aware of the sweet taste of toxins in his own mouth. He was so close and so, so hungry. It would be so easy to just...

When had he gotten so close?

Saps lips were temptingly close to his own when the smell of burnt fish hit his nose. He leaned in to kiss him and his breath hitched, body shaking as his lips met the man's. He fought the instinctive urge to open his mouth and pull Sap closer, heart pounding against his ribcage as he braced his hands against Saps chest. Using all his strength, he pushed Sap back and grabbed the pan off the stove, cringing at the loud noise it made as Sap fell to the floor.

As soon as the pan was off the fire he gathered the toxin in his mouth and spat it on the floor, turning to his crewmate. The spit hissed, sizzling on the wood planks as it melted away- reminding him of the acidic fate his crewmate would find himself.

Sap sat up, rubbing his head as it was finally clearing. He groaned softly, "What?" Voice groggy from sleep, he looked at Bad in confusion, "Bad? Why am I in the kitchen?"

The siren laughed nervously, "You ah...I was singing and forgot that I really... *really* shouldn't with people around..." The pirate made an 'o' shape with his mouth before his expression morphed into something more worried, "Wait- I didn't do anything right? You're okay?"

Bad shook his head frantically, "Nonono-! I'm- I'm fine- are YOU okay? You're the one who...y'know..." Sap chuckled shakily and stood up, wobbling, "I'm fine, my ass-"

"Language-"

" *Butt* just hurts from the fall."

Bad nodded, sighing in relief before very nervously going back to cooking, "That's...good. Good..." Sap watched tiredly as he moved, walking to lean on the table as he did. His nerves were still wracked by the rude awakening, but other than that he began to slowly calm his heart as he walked. The siren moved gracefully through the kitchen, each movement fluent and seemingly accented by a half-twirl or a skip every now and then. It was like watching an amateur ballerina, and the thought stretched a soft smile across his lips. Under any other circumstance, Sap would've thought Bad was royalty and tried to sweep him off his feet in an instant in the same fashion Dream met George. With his long ivory black hair soft to the touch, unmarked fair skin, and lively green eyes framed by almost feminine lashes, it was an easy mistake to make.

Honestly, he couldn't believe Bad was real at all. Standing there with a shirt twice his size- one that Sap recognized as his own that he'd given to the siren- slipping off his shoulders and brown shorts. With a personality almost as sweet as sugar and pure as snow, it was hard to believe Bad had chosen to stay with them, of all people.

Yet he knew Bad his own hardships- whether he wanted to talk about them or not. The bullet hadn't gotten in his shoulder by a slim chance of shot, and you didn't obsess over someone in the fashion that his captor did...but Sap wasn't going to force the answer from him. Bad would be ready in time, just like Dream would, just like he would.

Something warmed in Saps chest. There was something oddly domestic about the way the crew worked, even more in the bond he'd formed with the Siren.

It was just...domestic. Familial. That was all he could really use to describe it- although he scoffed at the idea.

Domestic wasn't something he could do. It was something he gave up on a long time ago. Not that he had a personal problem with it- he would have loved something like that. Settling down with someone he loved, maybe have or adopt a kid, maybe on a little farm...

He *dreamt* of that. He *wanted* that.

But he just couldn't.

Life was cruel, and that's just how it was.

So for now, he'd just settle for this. This ship, this crew, this life, this odd little family.

He didn't mind it and he was content with this.

The noirette ran his fingers through his hair and took a deep breath to pull himself from his

thoughts before grinning, "How do you manage to look so angelic every morning?"

Bad rolled his eyes, feeling blood rush to his face at the comment. He was grateful that what happened hadn't affected anything too much, and he was used to Saps flirting at this point. It was almost routinely endearing.

Shaking his head, he focused on the food again, "I don't know." He said simply before glancing at Sap over his shoulder, "Maybe it's the genes? Or perhaps just the fact I'm the combination of two species that rely's on their attractiveness to lure prey or stay alive?"

Sap scoffed before chuckling, "Or maybe it's just you."

The siren froze at that, something stirring in him. A pit formed in his stomach once again, his head swimming a bit.

"Or maybe it's just you."

Said so matter of factly. Where had he heard that before? It seemed so familiar...

He shook his head again and chuckled, brushing it off, "Oh haha. That's sweet of you, but I think it's just the second thing."

At that, silence took over the kitchen again- comfortable, lovely silence.

After a bit, Sap noticed Bads gaze trail out the window. He looked almost sad. Something distant in his eyes made Saps heart ache a bit.

"Do you miss swimming?"

Sap took a shot in the dark and Bad looked surprised, before smiling sadly, "Now that you ask...yea, quite a lot more that I'd like to admit, though..."

"Then why don't you take a dip?"

Bad snorted, "Oh please. You know Dream would have my head- it's dangerous. I could get spotted, or tangled in a net..." He paused before snickering to himself, "Well, another net that is."

A memory flashed in Saps head, a beautiful lagoon he and Dream had known about a little bit into the island, "No- I don't mean here. There's a lagoon a bit deeper into the island. I've been a few times and so has Dream. It's real pretty and there's hardly anyone there, so it's perfect!"

Bad lit up at the notion, "Could we go? Today?" He asked hopefully. Saps smile widened, "I could ask Dream, but if he says it's okay then sure..." he paused, "Breakfast first though."

As Sap said that, he'd never seen the Siren more excited.

Good. He looked better happy anyway, and Sap would do anything to keep it that way.

His family's happiness was the top of his list.

"Do you have any idea where he was last spotted?" Spifey's voice was clear as he laced his boots, Skeppy waiting on the other side of the door.

"A6d spotted him in the port of Lesbos with some guys with pink hair- and speaking of him, I'll be sending him and Finn with you." The hunter guaffed, rolling his eyes, "The last thing I need is Finn slowing me down with those stupid disguises and needing to look 'presentable'" He walked out of the dressing room, adjusting his coat, "I'll take A6d, but not him."

"Well too damn bad. The person you're hunting is part siren, so you're going to need Finn's expertise on this one. Plus you know how those two are."

"No-"

"This isn't a fucking request, it's an order Spifey." Skeppy snapped.

The pair glared at each other, both unwilling to back down until Spifey finally huffed.

"Fine. But you tell Finn he better cut it with the stupid makeup or I'm-"

"Going to throw it overboard? I'd like to see you try." Their heads turning to see the light brunette standing at the door, A6d behind him. It appeared the cloth he wore over his eyes had been changed recently, no thanks to Finn's probable nagging. It was now the same jet black as his hair and rest of his outfit.

Finn looked just as youthful and handsome as ever, his curly hair fluffed and blue eyes still striking and lustrous like a young noblewoman. Everything about him was the same Spifey as remembered it, and honestly the hunter wasn't surprised. He only wondered if Finn and A6d were as attached at the hip as they used to be. The noirette had always been the sturdy rock in Finn's ocean since they were young despite their social status', and it would be nice to see that hadn't changed.

"Finn! Still a little princess I see?" He teased, and Finn chuckled slightly, "Damn right I am. You still the same sarcastic asshole?"

"Yep~"

"Good. Wouldn't have it any other way."

Skeppy clapped his hands to get the room's attention, and it did. His eyes roved over the room and he smiled, "Now that we're all here...let's get sailing. There's a few others we need to pick up- one last stop before we begin the search..." His eyes moved over to Spifey again, "You might actually know them."

Feel's like I'm Drowning.

Chapter Summary

Spending a bit of time on the more "villainous" crew :)

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: This chapter was written before there was any twitter drama with A6d, but I refused to take a cheap shot and kill him here now when I had plans for him and writing him out would be too much of a headache(More like a migraine) so I instead replanned a bit for his character. I hope you all can understand and continue to enjoy none-the-less.

There will also not be any A6d/Finn as endgame in this because of that.

Oh! And a tiny gore warning for like- one sentence.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When the meeting concluded, Finn was the first out, A6d following close behind.

'What a stupid plan...' He thought to himself, 'Why won't Skep just give this up?'

A6d felt the thoughts thrumming in his head and he put a hand on Finn's shoulder, making the shorter man stop and turn to his companion, "You're angry."

The statement was simple. So matter-of-fact and coldly stated with a thick French accent and a blank expression that to anyone else sounded insensitive. But to Finn, those two words meant a thousand. There was a soft, genuine tone in his voice that said it all. He was concerned, plain and simple.

It was the same for A6d. Finn didn't need to say a word to show how he felt at that moment, his body language told more than his words could have in that moment. His hair was frizzed, his walk was more of a stride and his feet hit the ground less than delicately, his cheeks were slightly reddened- He was frustrated. Angry. And A6d could tell why.

"It's about the hunt, isn't it?"

The shorter man sighed and smiled weakly. A6d knew him all too well, there wasn't any point in lying, "My room, let's go. We'll talk there."

They made their way around the Navy ship quickly, only stopping once inside the room. Finn shut and locked the door before turning, sitting on his bed and burying his face in his palms, "Angry- *really* doesn't cover how I feel right now Sixy."

The bed beside him dipped and an arm draped around his shoulders, pulling him to lean against the other man. He curled against the noirettes chest with a soft sigh, "You know how I feel about this. I can't help but feel upset about all this. He's not an animal, he's a living being like me! and I sure

as hell wouldn't want to be locked up like that!"

"Then why are we helping with this?"

"Because Skep won't stop dangling that 'you owe me' shit in front of me! One time was enough because he *did* save my ass, but after I fulfilled that I did what I had to because it was what I believed in!!" Pushing off, he stood up and flailed his arms in frustration while A6d paused. What had Finn done? He didn't remember why he'd gotten arrested as it was a rare moment that him and Finn had been separated, but now he felt he needed to know if he was going to help.

"And yes, I got arrested for it- but just because he fucking bailed me out doesn't mean I owe him shit when I didn't ask him to, much less does it make me want to help him hunt down Bad!!" He snapped and took a deep breath before grabbing a pillow and screaming into it, making A6d chuckle. Finn huffed and ran a hand through his hair, "Why is he so obsessed with this anyway? Yes, Bad is a rare crossbreed but that's never mattered to Skeppy before! He's never been so obsessed with something before and I can't put a finger down on why...!"

A6d sighed and extended his hand, as if beckoning Finn closer, "Alright, I think it's time for you to take a breather before we discuss this further. Your mind is cluttered with emotion and I can feel it, Finn."

There was a moment of hesitation that flickered across the young man's face as he stared at the noirettes open palm before walking closer. He reached out, the way his smaller hand slotted against A6d's perfectly bringing him a sense of relaxation as he let A6d pull him in again, scooting further back on the bed to let the other man lay against him. Almost instantly, he felt the calming effects of A6d's aura and relaxed, eyes fluttering shut as he paid attention to the way his body perfectly fit against the others. Perfect like puzzle pieces. Perfect like Bees and honey, like fish and water, like yin and yang- it was perfect, and serene, and just *right*.

He nodded off, face nuzzled in A6d's abdomen and arms. A6d smiled and ran his hands down Finn's back, stopping as he felt the center. He could feel the center of his aura under there, and after so long it was as easy to find as it was his own.

'Time for a bit of soul searching...'

With the pull and flick of his wrist, the soft blue orb was in his hand. It flickered in his hand like a flame and his gaze softened at the sight of it. How easily he was able to do this was only a cruel reminder of what he was and what Finn had done so long ago.

"I'll trade anything!" The young blue-eyed boy begged. He couldn't have been older than 16, and for that A6d pitied him. To want such bloodthirsty vengeance. To lose one's childish innocence at such an age.

It was always something to be pitied.

But also something to find foolish and idiotic.

He shook his head. Now was not the time to reminisce over deeds past and done, not when there was so little time to plan at hand. A6d's other hand left the soft curls they rested in and cupped the ball of light carefully. He pressed his thumbs into it a bit and Finn made a soft noise under him. He moved them up and silently searched, ignoring the sweetest little noises that Finn was making in

favor of searching for the memory.

'Where where where- aha!'

He stopped at a specific frame in time, focusing on it.

He could see the door to Skeppy's room. Finn looked troubled as he opened it, holding something tightly in his hand. He stepped in the room and shut the door before rushing to the bed. Bad sat there, green eyes curious but distant and cloudy, expression lost and exhausted. A6d could hear Finn's voice.

*"There's no more time I'm sorry- we have to get you out of here now."
Unfurling his palm, he knelt by Bad's ankle and held up the key, the silver glinting in the light.*

*"Oh Finn..." A6d muttered to himself, watching him remove the chain from the Siren's ankle and stuff it in his pocket. He could tell his hands were shaking as he stood and scooped up the siren in his arms, cradling his form tightly against his chest.
"You need to be quiet okay? Most of the guards are away but I have no idea where Skeppy is and there's still people on the ship. We have to be quick."
Finn's words were fast and shaky as he pulled the door open and bolted out the door. A6d followed him as he weaved through the halls, stopping every now and then and ducking to avoid the randomly scattered guards around the vessel. They finally reached the deck when there was a shout.*

"I've seen enough."

A6d pulled himself from the memory, blinking a few times behind his blindfold. He sighed, smiling to himself as he cupped the flickering soul in his hands, the taste of disapproval on his lips.
"Finn..."

Of course Finn helped Bad escape. How could A6d not have guessed. He had grown far too attached to the Siren after so much time and his heart was far too good to carry on with the process. He couldn't fault him for that, not for one second.

He let go with one hand and looked at the body under him with disapproval.

'there are things to be discussed.'

"Finn...wake up..." He shook the small body gently and Finn made a soft noise of refusal, burying his head further into the noirettes abdomen. A6d tisked in annoyance, shaking his head.

"Alright, you win. Just a bit longer." He gently rubbed circles into Finn's back, thoughts trailing back to his words earlier.

"He's never been so obsessed with something before and I can't put a finger down on why...!"

Finn was right. Skeppy had never been so obsessed with anything before- he'd always gotten interested in something and then lost interest days later, but with Bad something was different. Yet even he couldn't figure out what that was and it threw him for a loop. Skeppy's soul was an open

book to A6d, its pages turned and flipped so simply and flawlessly. He didn't even need to put him under the spell to look into his memories and how easy he was to read was amusing to A6d. But that moment Bad had been pulled aboard...The moment Skeppy had seen him...

There was a flicker of recognition in his eyes, but when A6d had tried to look at the memory...

It was closed up. It was shut under so many locks and keys that it actually had given A6d a migraine trying to get past them all. It was something Skeppy held so precious to him that he refused the memory to be taken and seen by anyone. He remained an open book with every other memory but that one thing, and it puzzled A6d. What was that memory? What made everything else so worthless, but that memory so precious?

And Furthermore...

What the hell was Skeppy not telling them?

There's so much water. It's filling the cabin and the halls and all he can think is where his parents are. Are they trapped below deck like him? Are they safe, wondering where he is while on a rowboat? There's a storm raging on outside, the sheets of rain and the thunder are ear-splitting. There's singing- oh Amu there's singing and he can hear it. Its so calming and melodic, but he knows- fuck he knows its dangerous because in the middle of the song theres screeches and screams as people are being pulled under by those fucking things.

He wants his mommy. He knows it's pathetic but he does- he wants to be safe in her arms and away from here. There's a hole in the ship where they collided with the jagged rocks and he's trying desperately to hold onto the ropes. There are a few other men with him and he can tell they're all scared too. Some are praying to Xisuma, others are cursing to Amu, but all he can think is how could you really blame the Gods in a time like this? Then again, It's all he can take not to scream as the water is rising so fast and he's nearly under. But then another man screams and one by one everyone around him is being pulled under and oh fucking shit the water is blackening with blood and he's screaming. He's screaming and crying for all he's worth, desperately holding onto the ropes on the wall.

Then there's a cold, firm hand around his ankle and in moments he's pulled under, saltwater rushing in his mouth and stinging his eyes as he's dragged through the murky water and out the hole at the side of the ship. The most he can make out is a tail that's as inky black as the water with red blotches. He can barely make out other things, smashed wood and barrels and-

Fuck-

There's dead or dying around him. It's a bloodbath as he can see sirens feeding grotesquely. Then he spots it.

His mother's body being dragged to the depths, her stomach torn open and entrails being pulled out.

It's at that moment he realizes that he's truly alone and that he's next, this thing going to drag him to the depths just like everyone else...

Except...he's not going deeper. It's pulling him away from the frenzy if anything, and towards the

surface.

Suddenly he's gasping, his head briefly breaching the surface before being pulled under again, his lungs still burning for more air. He can make out a reef, and suddenly he's pulled in a hole in a drop-off. That same inky body is wrapped around him like a constricting snake and he can see a pair of eyes- blinding white and a face that looks almost just as scared as he feels, its arms tightly wrapped around him like it's trying to conceal him.

It's then he understands that this thing isn't one of them. For some unknown reason, it's risking itself to help him- to save him.

Even underwater he can hear the screeches of the sirens passing by, but the longer his lungs burn and the pain intensifies, darkness edging his vision as he's losing consciousness. He's running out of air, his limbs becoming limper as he's giving into the sea, his lips parting and water rushing into his lungs as he passes out.

Skeppy woke with a gasp of air, gulping at it as he sat up and grasped his chest, eyes wide open. He was sweating bullets and trembling, his other hand having a death grip on the sheets as he felt his heart thundering in his chest. Amusix, why did he have to remember that day vividly? It haunted him like a phantom when all he wanted was to forget.

He took a deep breath as he shut his eyes, counting before exhaling.

'Think about something else. Something better.'

He opened his eyes to the clear sky.

"Hey!"

He turned his head to see another boy beside him. He was around his age- 11 or 12- with long ivory black hair, the brightest green eyes, and fair skin. He looked down at Skeppy with a pout, "You fell asleep on the beach again you muffin!"

Skeppy stared at him with bleary eyes, slowly sitting up. The boy followed him with his eyes and Skeppy reached out, arms wrapping around the younger boys shoulders and pulling him into a tight hug. He buried his face in the crook of the boy's neck.

"Bad, You don't need to keep looking after me you know...."

Bad let out a quiet giggle and wrapped his arms around Skeppy's back, "I know. But I want to, while I'm here Skep!"

There was a silence.

"What do you mean, while I'm here?" Skeppy felt his heart squeeze and he gripped the back of Bad's shirt tighter. Bad pulled back with a sad smile, "I can't stay with you forever Skep. I'm not...I'm not like you. If I'm found out I'll get hurt..."

Skeppy shook his head, "No! No no no! You can't leave me! I-i-"

"Skeppy..."

Taking Bads hand, he held it tightly to his chest and looked in Bads eyes, voice rushed, "Bad I am going to take care of you someday!! I promise, I'm not going to let anyone or anything hurt you- then we can be together forever!! Just please- please don't leave me-" His voice broke as his eyes watered. Ever since the shipwreck he only had Bad, and now he would leave him too? He would

do anything to make sure it didn't happen.

He only had Bad, and Bad only had him.

There was a look of surprise on the young siren's face before he smiled, giggling softly, "Alright Skeppy. For now though, you've got to take care of yourself..." He slipped something into Skeppy's hand before leaning forward and pressing a kiss to his cheek, "Which means no more falling asleep on the beach you muffin!!"

Skeppy let out a sigh, the tensiity leaving his shoulders as his eyes fluttered downcast, "I...okay..." "Now let's get going, it's getting dark." Bad stood and started walking down the shoreline again, but he sat there for a second, staring at the item Bad had given him. There was a small light pink seashell in his palm, dripping wet with a simplistic design.

"Skep!!"

His heart thudded in his chest and he stood, running to catch up with the siren, "Coming!!" He wouldn't let Bad go. He didn't know how, but He was going to keep his promise. He swore it, and this precious little shell was his reminder.

"My reminder..."

When Skeppy opened his eyes again, he was back in bed, twirling the small pink seashell between his fingers. It's color had faded over the years, but it remained in pristine condition from careful handling. It was still perfectly put together and in his position, meaning he still had a promise to uphold, "You took care of me for so long, Bad..."

He gripped the shell as he stared at the ceiling, "Why won't you just let me do the same for you now..."

Chapter End Notes

Everyone: Awww im sad Skeppy is the villian-

Me: Ha. Ya thought wrong. (not completely, at least)

Unwanted Past and Curious Present

Chapter Summary

Bad and Sapnap spend quality bonding time and learn some things about each other,
We meet 3(technically, 5) new characters, and Skeppy recruits 1 of 3 new characters!

Chapter Notes

This has got to be my favorite chapters to write- but then again I've loved writing every single one of these!!!

For those who want to know, if anyone wants to make fanart or anything of the sort I'm completely fine with it and would be delighted to see it! My twitter is TinyHyperBee, so if you want to you can go ahead and @ me or just follow me- whatever you'd like to. I love you all so much!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"No."

The two letter word was like a slap to the face for Sap.

"There's no way, not with the increase in navy soldiers and the incident yesterday. It's a solid no, Sap."

"But Dream-"

"No and that's final! I'm sorry Sap, but we can't risk it right now..."

Sapnap felt annoyance bubbling inside him, eye twitching, "Dream, come on he's homesick! You don't really expect him to stay cooped up forever right?" Dream pinched the bridge of his nose. It was really too early for this, and he still had to deal with Techno at some point. At this rate, if things like this kept popping up, he wouldn't have enough patience to deal with him. However, he also knew Sapnap wasn't going to drop the subject till he got a compromise at the least.

"Of course not! He just can't right now, Sap..." He let out a deep sigh when he spotted the stubborn pout on the noirettes face, "Look, maybe later tonight okay?" His voice had softened and Sap perked up.

"Tonight?"

"Yes, Tonight. It'll be under the cover of darkness and most of the navy guards will be either drunk or asleep, so it's safer." Sap groaned, "Why didn't you say that the first time!!" He snapped, rolling his eyes. Dream snorted, "You wouldn't leave me alone, so I only just thought about it," He looked at the noirette, quirkling a brow, "Now, are you going to help me lift this?"

Sap rolled his eyes before walking over, "Oh? And what happened to that fairy super strength

huh?"

"The 'fairy super strength' doesn't prevent me from throwing out my back, Idiot! I'm almost 200 years old!"

"You still look like your fuckin' 25, dude."

"Just help me lift this!!"

"Are we almost there?"

"Almost~"

Sap hummed, his hand around Bad's as he led him along the path. It was the middle of the night, the two of them wearing cloaks to help them blend in with the shadows around them. The forest was silent, save for the crickets and occasional nocturnal animals out and about. Bad had been almost skipping with excitement the whole way, humming and pitching in with the quick question of 'are we there yet' every now and then- something Sap couldn't blame Bad for. Bad had probably gone far longer out of his natural form than he had in a while- maybe even ever! It was stupid to assume he wasn't itching for that little freedom again.

As they approached the spot, Sap could see the slight glow of the water from beyond the trees. A smile stretched across his face, "Alright, we're here-" Sap was cut off as the siren sprinted past him, his cloak falling at his feet. He chuckled and ran after the smaller male, picking up the cloak as he went.

There's a rush as he sees Bad stop just at the ledge.

He slowed and stopped by Bad, gazing into the crystal blue water of the lagoon lit up by colorful glowing corals and full of beautiful fish swimming around. He noticed the look in Bad's eyes and his smile widened, "You can hop in whenever you're ready- it's fairly deep."

Without another word, the siren scrambled with his clothes before diving into the clear water.

Sapnap watched with wonder as he swam into the coral, disappearing under it all. He leaned out a bit out of curiosity, eyes scanning the water in an attempt to find Bad again.

There was a loud splash and Sap yelped as his wrist was grabbed, Bad pulling him into the water. He swam to the surface and coughed up the salty water, his hair sticking to his forehead. His headband slipped in front of his eyes and he tried to feel for it, eyes squeezed shut.

"W-what was that for?!"

He heard bubbling laughter and a sleek, scaled tail brush his legs followed by thin, sharp spines that made his body stiffen, "H-here- I got it-" The tips of sharp claws gently prodded his face as his bandana was pushed up his face, letting him open them. Sapnap gave a start as he was met with blindingly white eyes, flinching and squinting his eyes, "Woah- little bright there-"

"Sorry," Bad giggled, swimming back a bit. Sap jumped a bit as the spines grazed his legs again, and decided it would be best to stay out of the water while Bad was swimming to avoid an accident. He swam back to edge, pulling himself up onto the shore and sitting there as he watched the siren swim and jump in and out of the water- occasionally doing little tricks.

Eventually, as an hour passed, he pulled himself to relax beside Sapnap. The pair sat in comfortable silence, until eventually Bad spoke up quietly.

"Hey Sap?"

"Mmm?"

"Is Sapnap...your real name?" Sap let out a startled laugh at the sudden question, looking at Bad in

surprise. However, the siren seemed to be serious and Sappnap's expression dropped, frowning a bit.

"Well...No. But I very much prefer it." Bad's mouth took an 'o' shape and he smiled apologetically, "Sorry- but if it makes you feel better, Bad isn't my real name either!" Curiosity filled Sappnap and he raised a brow, "Oh?"

"Yep!" Bad continued, "My real name is actually tattooed onto my arm in Siren form, like most Sirens. It's just in my language, so all you guys really see is a bunch of symbols on my arm."

"Woah- Can I see?"

"Sure!"

The siren lifted his arm to show Sap the small writing. It was in a slightly paler color to his dark grey skin, so Sap could barely make out the symbols, "What...does it say?"

"Halo."

Sap blinked in surprise, looking back over to Bad. Bad recognized the look and chuckled, "I know. Why would I stop using that? It's so pretty?!" Sap chuckled guiltily, letting go of Bad's arm as he continued, "Well...The thing is I'm not really sure. All my life I've been just called 'Bad' by everyone I've come across, so I guess I grew so used to 'Bad' I regularly forget it's not only not my real name, but also a negative thing..." His voice was gentle and distant, trailing off. Sap smiled painfully, "Heh...Wish I could forget mine."

Bad was the curious one now, tilting his head, "If you don't mind me asking...what *is* your real name?" There was a moment of silence as Sappnap seemed to be pondering it, chewing his bottom lip. He eventually sighed, "Sure. Dream knows it anyway so why not. But I'm warning you now I do *not* like when people use it so- please don't..." Bad's eyes softened, the glowing white orbs full of sympathy, "Of course not, I promise I won't use it." Taking a deep breath, Sap worked up the courage- heart twisting in pain as memories flooded back, "It's..."

"Belial!!" The old lady screeched, "The harlot and the beast had a fucking spawn of the devil king himself, Keralis!!"

The baby cried as the doctor held him protectively, "For fucks sake Miriam it's a newborn baby!"

"A baby born from the womb of that- that fucking Succubus and her damn hell hound!!"

"I have had enough of this, woman! You will shut your damn mouth and stop speaking ill of the dead if you are such as much of a gods-fearing woman as you claim to be!" The lady cried in anger, eyes full of pure hatred and malice being directed at the child in the farmers around him.

Sap couldn't stop the memories Salvino had passed to him, heart thundering and tears brimming his eyes.

"That is no child of Xisuma, Sal. It's a child of Keralis and it needs to be killed." The hunter beside him spoke up, eyes hardened. Salvino's heart ached at the harsh words, looking around at the cold, angry faces that surrounded him, "You all are insane! He is just a child! He's done nothing to deserve these horrid names!" The townspeople gathered at the front yard of the little woodland home that once had laid at the outskirts of town. The once beautiful home made of soft spruce and cobble- humble and charming, so obviously built out of love and care- was now burning to cinders. The red hot flames reached for the starry sky, and the garden out front slowly began to join the flames. The Doctor growled under his breath, holding the baby more securely to his chest. He knew what the townspeople would do if they got a hold of the child, and he'd be damned to let anything happen to Eisheth and Raymond's baby. He'd gone through hell helping deliver him- and not only that, but this was his god-child and Eisheth and Raymond were his friends. Sure, they'd been different- but they were human at heart.

He knew exactly what he looked like at that moment. Golden blonde hair a mess, skin and clothes

marked with ash and soot, glasses broken, teeth bared in a snarl, and eyes full of fierce determination and fury. He had no doubt one of the townspeople was responsible for the terrible fire that engulfed Eisheth and Rayden- if not all of them.

Salvino continued to argue with the townspeople until finally, the priest made his way through the crowd. The elder was calm in his nightdress as he looked at the baby with a neutral gaze.

“This child...It is Eisheth and Ray’s?”

Salvino’s stomach twisted, “Yes, Father...”

Without another word, the priest reached out and touched the baby’s head gently, “Salvino is right. This is but a child. He has yet to give us any reason to harbor malintent towards him. If raised right, there’s a chance he could be just fine.” The priest took a breath and looked at Salvino, “You will raise the child, understand?” Sal nodded hopefully, and the priest continued, “But as due to Eisheth and Raymond’s origins and backgrounds, there is no doubt this child inherited those sides to them. No matter what, This child is of Keralis, and thus shall be named as such.”

“But, father-!”

“He will be named Belial, and that is final.”

Salvino quieted at the Priest’s firm gaze, sighing and slowly nodding, “Yes...father...”

“My real name is Belial, and I hate it.” Sap finally said, and Bad put a hand on his back. He was near tears as he turned his gaze to Bad again. The siren held out his arms wordlessly, and Sapnap shakily chuckled before accepting the gesture. Bad spoke again, much softer now, “So...where did Sapnap come from then?”

A good memory. Sap’s mind drifted away from the memory of his naming, and he sniffled.

“Sapnap was the name my God-father called me by. It was a silly thing because I had a tendency to try and lick tree sap all the time and it would make me really sleepy- so i’d nap a lot.” Bad snorted, hugging Sapnap tightly, “Tree sap??” He giggled, and Sapnap laughed a little, “Look- I was a bit of a stupid kid!”

Memories forgotten, the pair continued to make small talk for hours to come under the starry sky.

There was a loud, shrieking cry of anger as the chains were strained against, followed by the heavy beating of wings and the rattling of metal.

“You all will pay for this!!”

The words were full of malice and venom, while followed by hollow, crazed laughter.

“Every. Last. One of you traitors!!”

*The young boy peeked out from behind the rock, seeing two men standing over another man who was chained to the floor, “I gave you everything, but you traitorous bastards just don’t fucking get it!!!” He spat, **“I’m helping you!! Helping to repent for your sins and helping you earn your freedom!!”***

“You’re a murderous fuck!!!”

The man with dirty blonde hair snapped, his foot rearing back and imbedding itself in the man on the floors stomach, a pained groan and sputtering coughs leaving him with a strained chuckle,

"I'm not the murderer here...I'm...the fucking savior!"

"Fuck you!!"

"I gave you freedom because you earned it Blop!!"

"You gave me NOTHING!! NOTHING BUT SUFFERING AND ENDLESS PAIN!"

"YOU UNGRATEFUL CRETIN, I GAVE YOU THE REDEMPTION YOU EARNED AND EVEN YOUR FREEDOM AFTER!!"

The man shrieked and the two men cried out, covering their ears. The boy reared back, covering his ears while wildly shaking his head. The scream was ear-splitting, close to blowing out his eardrums.

It rang, his head erupting in endless pain as he felt a warm liquid run from his ears until suddenly it stopped- his head still throbbing in pain, yet the ringing only a soft buzz. He uncovered his ears, looking at his palm to see it covered in glistening red.

Looking around, the boy tried to remember how he had gotten here.

He remembered dinner at the orphanage- they had that gross gruel stuff. He remembered because he had started a food fight with it- yea. Then he remembered reading before bed with...

Who?

"You're not supposed to be here, kid."

He looked up, and suddenly he's standing in front of the man on the floor. Up-close, he can see flecks of gold in warm brown eyes, hair a fluffed, wild mess, skin pale and seeming to have rope burn marks littering it. Large, elegant golden brown wings folded themselves behind the man's back, and he was almost seeming to have a golden shine outlining his head like a halo.

He found himself dropping to his knees before the almost angelic being, his eyes following him the entire time.

"You need to remember who you are, and go home." The man's voice had gone from being venomous and hateful, to being so soothing and gentle to the boy's ears. It sounded like how good chocolate tasted, and he almost chuckled at the thought. He wanted to object. He wanted to stay with this man. But as he opened his mouth no sound came out, and he suddenly felt compelled to do as the man said.

He closed his eyes, trying to remember who he was...but his mind was only a blur.

What even was his own name?

Who was he?

Who...

"Tom...my..."

Tommy- yes, that was right.

"Tommy..."

His name was Tommy Innit, he's 16 years old, he had his mom's golden hair and dad's blue eyes....

"Tommy!"

He lives in an orphanage, parents died in a pirate raid, he has a best friend...

"Tommy!!!"

His best friend...who he reads stories with. Who he confides in. Who's like a little brother to him...

His reason for living.

“Tommy wake up!!”

Tommy awoke with a sharp gasp, feeling two hands shaking him awake, “Tubbo!!” He sat up and immediately smacked his head into the other boy’s, who yelped in pain as he jumped back. The blonde groaned, rubbing his forehead, “Fuck...ouch...”

The boy beside him repeated the motion, “Double ouch.”

“Sorry, you just scared the shit out of me-” Tommy could still feel his heart pounding in his chest, sweating bullets and muscles trembling as he panted.

Dear Xisuma, he felt like he’d just run from the royal guards. What the hell...

What was that dream about again? He remembered screeching, and a man who was near angelic with glorious wings and the softest voice. It was like a family member, comforting and soothing...

How could he remember that, but not the man’s face?

“What were you dreaming about?” Tommy looked at Tubbo in surprise, finding those icy blue eyes boring into him with innocent curiosity past, long, messy locks of pale blonde hair. They inspected his expression closely even in the pitch blackness of the orphanage bedroom, head tilted a bit.

Looking back into them, it was easy to tell that even in the dark there was something so unnatural to them. Hell, there was plenty unnatural with Tubbo- like how his ears almost came to points, how he copied some of Tommy’s mannerisms, how despite being smaller and shorter than Tommy, he could pick up two adults at once with ease, how thin he was despite eating more than a hard working 30 year old lumberjack, and then the way his hair seemed to almost perfectly pure white in the light of the moon. His near-psychic abilities were just another thing to add to the list of oddities about his best friend, and Tommy didn't mind any of it. It's just who Tubbo was...

But there was always something about his eyes. They were like the eye’s of someone so much older than him. Like the eyes of someone who had seen empires rise and fall, ships sail and sink, the beginning and end of many stories. It admittedly unsettled Tommy a bit- but he’d never admit it out loud.

The golden blonde boy sighed, looking around the room. He was surprised to find everyone still asleep despite how loud they were- but then again, all the kids here were used to the loud noises and shouting. He rubbed his eyes and yawned, the adrenaline finally flushing from his system. Roping an arm around Tubbo’s neck, he flopped back down on the bed and pulled the other boy with him, “Mm...I’ll tell you in the morning, okay? I’m tired as hell right now...”

The pale blond huffed, grabbing and pulling the blankets over them once more, “Fine, but I’m holding you to that!”

“Fine with me...”

He yawned, feeling Tubbo turn his back to him after his eyes fluttered shut- heavy with sleep.

With how close they were, Tommy could catch a whiff of sweet strawberries. His chest warmed, memories long forgotten resurfacing. He remembered his mom in the garden, her soft smile beaming at him while he helped to plant this year's strawberries.

Home. Tubbo never failed to make him feel like he was back home. Before he was stuck in the

orphanage, before it all happened...
Before his parents died...

Tubbo was all he really had left in this world- no family, no friends...just him and Tubbo against whatever this hellscape called "life" threw at him.

And he'd be damned if he just let another person in his life die for him or because of him.

His tired mind drifted back to his dream. It felt so real- like he was actually there while it was happening. He was so sure it had been real. That man addressed him directly...

What if it was?

"You say you're tracking down a siren?" The man pondered, looking at the drawing Skeppy handed him. He was around the same age as Skeppy- a werewolf hybrid with deep brown eyes and dark brownish-black hair. Skeppy nodded, "Alright...that's a hard one, but easy enough with the right people." He smiled at the noirette, walking around the counter to the main part of the store, inspecting the shelves, "Who do you have onboard that's a part of this?"

"A monster hunter for hire, an expert on mermaids and sirens, and a demon." The man paused, looking at him, "A demon...?" His ears flattened back and he seemed to falter, a small dog-like whine sounding very quietly. Skeppy tensed, eyes widening in alarm, "He's not dangerous until you provoke him! He's mostly there only because the Expert is..." This didn't seem to assure the man as he grabbed some bottles from the shelf filled with various colored liquids.

"Right...well I'm not sure about this demon, but the other two definitely are the right people! When are you heading back out to sea?"

"2 days."

The man turned to him, seeming to ponder this for a moment, "I think that's enough time for me to prepare. I'll be there then- but first, do you have any objects that belonged to this siren? Maybe something they gave you?"

Skeppy's stomach sank, "Well...yes, a sea shell..." The man smiled widely, "That's perfect! Could you give me it?"

Instinctively, Skeppy reached to touch his pocket, fear filling his mind at the thought of separating from the precious object. The man noticed and smiled sympathetically, gaze softening, "I promise, I will bring it back to you in one piece in two days. I want to use it to try and cast a tracking charm, that is all."

Skeppy gulped, nerves filling him. He took a deep breath and slowly took out the little pink seashell, looking at it before handing it to the man shakily. He took it carefully, paying attention not to drop it.

"Is that all?"

"Mhm. I'll be there in 1 or 2 days with my companions. 3 of us in total, will you have room?"

"We should."

"Good. Then that's all. It was good doing business with you Mister...Brone Devland, was it?"

Skeppy cringed at the use of his real name, "Ah...we'll be working together for a while- so Skeppy is fine. Preferred, even."

"Oh- alright then. You can call me Vurb, and it was nice doing business with you Skeppy." He held out his hand, and Skeppy took it, shaking it.

“Same to you, Vurb.”

Chapter End Notes

It makes me kind of sad I have to clarify this, but there will be no shipping involving Tommy and Tubbo- I'm just terrible at writing observations as platonic between them, apparently. If you didn't assume so- thank you and ignore this. But just in case, I'm putting this here to clarify. Love you all and thank you for being so wonderful to me!!
<3

Also-

The names all have meanings, other than Tommy's. Belial is one meaning.
Brone Devland has two meanings put together. <3

TechnoBlade! The-...best thing to happen to those orphans?

Chapter Summary

Some more Tommy and Tubbo, Techno's a bit of a softie, and we meet the rest of Vurb's crew!

Chapter Notes

For those curious, I made a tumblr blog where I will be posting my designs for the characters! I'll also be posting chapter teasers, memes, and also will be answering non-spoiler questions that anybody wants to ask!

My tumblr is fantasticalbee.

So far, I only have Skeppy's design up and am working on Bad's human + Siren forms.

As for the chapter, enjoy you lovely people!! <3

The next day was slow, but when were days in the orphanage not? Get up, get dressed, get breakfast, lessons, recess, lessons, free time, supper, free time, dressed for bed, bed.

Rinse, wash, repeat.

It was routine for them all- with the occasional use of their free time being working. Tommy often took up small jobs at the docks from Navy men, fisher's, pirates, and sailors alike. It gave him potential connections and hopes for a stable job when he turned 18.

But what wasn't routine was Tommy's plagued thoughts. No matter what, his train of thought always was running back to the man from his dream- The man he had a hundred questions for.

Why was he chained up? Why did he have wings? Who were those other men?

The place they were in felt so familiar to him- with its carved stone walls creeping with vines and symbols cut into them. It was like it was calling him, welcoming him in like an old friend. What if it wasn't just a dream? What if that man with wings- that *angel* was really out there, chained in a cold damp dirty cave, fighting for his life against his captors?

Amu...what was he thinking?

He tried to push the persistent thoughts away as he walked along the cliffside, eyes roving down to the ledges below the cliff. His eyes caught sight of the rope bridge leading across a long gap, smiling to himself. That was familiar- as familiar as his best friend's face and the feeling of the fabric on his body. He could practically feel the wooden planks under his feet and rope in his hands, the swaying of the bridge in the slight wind. The bridge was just out of sight- and you wouldn't see it unless you really tried to look for it.

There. That was a better train of thought. The rope bridge- the one that was on their path leaving their secret little hideout.

Taking a deep breath of fresh air, Tommy thought back to that day.

"Tommy! Look what I found!" The two twelve-year-olds had been wandering the forest along the cliffside when Tubbo had spotted a crack in the rocks. It was just an exploration- trying to find a place to hide their treasure chest because the other kids in the orphanage had been stealing their hard-earned shillings.

The two easily slipped into the crevice, ending up in a small cave-like area. It was pitch black, the only light coming from a crack in the walls where sunlight peeked through.

"Woah...not bad!" The older grinned, "Could use some light and decorations, but its good enough!" Looking around, he found a crevice in the wall just big enough for their little treasure chest- tucking it in happily and making sure it was locked shut tight.

"How do we get out though?"

Tommy paused, looking at Tubbo in confusion, "Can't we go out the way we came?" Tubbo shook his head, "I don't think so- I can't seem to fit again..." Tommy paled, "oh shit..."

"M-maybe let's look for another exit?"

"Y...yea..."

The two searched the cave until Tommy found another larger crevice in the wall. He looked into it- seeing it led out, "Found an exit I think!!"

He got down, crawling out of the crevice where the stones got slipperier. He came out on the other side and stood, finding himself on the cliff's ledges. Tubbo crawled out behind him, and the two of them spotted a rickety old rope bridge, weathered from years of having been there. Deciding there was no other choice, they carefully crossed the bridge before following the path, finding themselves surprisingly close to the town. The two boys smiled.

This was the perfect hiding spot for them.

Over the years, they had replaced some of the wood planks- and were hoping soon to replace the ropes, as the old ones were getting worryingly worn and seemed close to snapping.

Tommy finally approached the town's idol statues, upon the highest hill with the grandest view. There was Xisuma- the people's favorite of the gods. His statue was of the finest polished marble- taken care of precisely. Then Amusix- one of the lesser liked gods and known to be a deal maker and soul collector. People said you saw him in your last moments of life. His state was of smooth stone and incredibly sturdy.

Keralis- the devil himself. He was seen in a negative light as the god of death, ruler of the hellish underworld. He was a trickster with no morals. His statue was of Blackstone. Then, Technoblade- the god of war, violence, pride, and anger. He wasn't one of the main three- as part of his myth was that he wasn't originally a god- but he was feared enough to be considered one. Double-crossing him meant terrible luck, and it was not a chance anyone wanted to take.

Leaning against the wall, he eye'd the remaining few townspeople approaching the idol offering statues of their gods with light skepticism. That kind of thinking was ridiculous. Tommy was never one to be superstitious, and his belief in the gods ended the night he watched his parents become headless through the small crack in the pantry. If Xisuma was really so kind, giving, and benevolent as everyone acclaimed him to be- why would he let such pain exist upon his own creations? It never made sense to Tommy, and as "angels" were part of those beliefs they didn't make sense either.

To him, any belief in the gods- preaching, prayers, offerings- was nothing but silly nonsense. He

may be young but he wasn't completely foolish enough to believe in such things. Preaching about Xisuma to onlookers wasn't going to make the pain and heartache become peace, appealing to Keralis wasn't going to help a dying loved one magically recover, offerings to Technoblade were not going to help your side win a raging war or keep your village safe from the raiders of said war, and praying to Amusix was never going to bring back an already dead loved one.

Tommy knew this for a fact. After all, he'd done all that and more- and all he'd ever gotten was the opposite in return.

"Tommy?"

His thoughts were pulled away by his friend's soft voice. Tubbo held the plate of raw honeycombs that were decorated with a few lavender's, a large smile on his face.

"Where's your offering?"

'Right...' Tommy thought to himself, 'The promise.'

Unlike Tommy, Tubbo believed in the gods. Tommy's distaste for the gods was one of the few things Tubbo didn't pick up, and the weekly offering was something the older had promised Tubbo he'd participate in simply because he'd get in trouble with the orphanage owners otherwise. It shocked him how much people were willing to scrape up and give away to their idiotic beliefs, even when they themselves were struggling.

He lifted his hand to show Tubbo the jar of pure honey, shaking it a bit with a small smile, "Right here. Happy?"

"Very!"

The teen stood up straight and looked to the offering areas. By now most were full of gifts and offerings- the day almost over. The jar of honey wasn't from the market, but actually from a wild beehive. Tommy didn't know how Tubbo managed to do it, but the younger male was incredible with insects, bugs, and arachnids of all types. Bee's were a specialty of his, so it was easy for him to gently break off some of the honeycombs and fill the jar with honey. The only issue was it had taken most of the day and so they were late to the offering.

Not that Tommy cared, but it was pretty much tradition to do it mostly in the noontime.

The pair walked over to the offering idols, and instinctively Tommy began to walk towards Xisuma's. Tubbo had always put their offerings there, so it was routine.

Only this time, Tommy noticed the pale blonde stop and look elsewhere.

"Tubbo? You coming?"

Tubbo didn't respond and Tommy followed his line of sight.

He found Tubbo staring at the offering idol belonging to TechnoBlade, barren of offerings and gifts. The idol stood tall and proud, casting a fearsome shadow over the both of them.

"The idol looks so...lonely, Tommy..."

Tommy nodded in slight agreement, but the lack of offerings was no surprise. It had been years since the last war, and considering Techno was only a conflict and war-driven god there was no reason to ask him for anything or offer whatever. Over the years, the offerings at his idol had been

steadily decreasing until now it was nothing.

"So it does. No reason to pay tribute to a god with no use hm?" Tommy chuckled, but Tubbo did not find the joke that amusing. He elbowed Tommy in the side before making a beeline for the idol. Tommy guffawed, rolling his eyes, "Tubbo, a statue can't seriously be lonely!"

"But a god can!" Tubbo chirped, sitting and putting the plate of honeycombs at the foot of the idol, "So, we'll keep him a bit of company! Just for a little." He smiled at Tommy and the older groaned, shouting, "Tubbo it's a *statue* !!"

The boy didn't respond, just beckoning Tommy over, "You can either join me, or go back and I'll follow later Tommy~!"

The blonde considered his options. Honestly, he wasn't really wanting to go back anyway- so it really was no big deal. But even so...even if it was merely a statue, there was always an eerie vibe it gave off. While the pose it struck was enough to intimidate, there was something entirely different in the eyes.

To Tommy, they didn't look to hold the murderous and bloodthirsty intent the god was said to have. Looking into them made Tommy's stomach sink in sadness and despair. Like there was a terrible weight on his shoulders he was struggling to hold up.

Tommy hated that feeling more than anything, but looking at Tubbo it was clear the younger was not budging- and Tommy wasn't comfortable leaving him alone.

He sighed and walked over. Tommy set down the jar of honey beside the plate before getting settled down beside the younger boy, slinging an arm over his shoulders, "You are an utter annoyance sometimes!" He shouted, pulling Tubbo in and ruffling his hair. The pale blonde laughed and squirmed- trying to get away from the assault on his hair, "Tommy!! Stop!!" He whined, and after a minute Tommy finally stopped with a victorious smirk.

Tubbo leaned against his chest, still giggling as he slowly calmed from his laughing fit. The pair sat in silence for a few moments until Tommy felt Tubbo fully relax against him. He looked to find his friend fast asleep against him, chest rising and falling with his breathing.

"Must have been really tired, huh?" He huffed, leaning fully back against the statue as he yawned softly.

Wait, when did *he* get tired? He was never tired this early in the afternoon- he'd done much more tiring things before and still was wide awake a bit into the night.

His eyelids felt heavy as he relaxed, warmth filled him.

Maybe a few moments of sleep wouldn't hurt...he'd wake up in just a bit, and he and Tubbo will head back to the orphanage...

His breathing slowed more and more, heart-thumping rhythmically as he shut his eyes, drifting to sleep.

Another town, another barren offering idol. Honestly, did these mortals really have to be at war just

to give honoring him a reason?

Who was he kidding...They only made offerings if they wanted something, and the only time he benefitted them was during a war or conflict. That's how it had always been.

His last stop was yet another fishing town he didn't care to remember the name of. A bit larger than the last few, located more up north- making the air chillier.

Techno took a quick look around, half expecting to only see another barren idol-

But stopped at the sight of two teenage boys fast asleep at the base of the statue, surprised. At the foot of the statue was a jar of honey beside a plate of pure honeycomb chunks, a few lavender's set on the side of the plate.

An offering.

Shaking his head, he didn't let himself get excited.

These kids probably wanted something in return, and that's the only reason they were offering. Probably being picked on or some shit.

He walked around the pair to the side of the idol base, picking up the plate. Taking a deep breath, he shut his eyes and used his magic to find the attached prayer.

He was shocked to find none.

There was no prayer, other than a soft whisper of an apology for not bringing anything more. Putting down the plate quietly, he picked up the jar of honey and searched it as well- letting out a soft huff-like laugh at the realization there was no prayer there either.

Techno's eyes moved over to the two teens once more, silently curious as to who in their right minds would offer something as precious as pure honey to a god without asking for anything in return. Resting the jar beside the plate again, he walked back around and knelt in front of the pair.

"Who are you two..." He murmured to himself, reaching forward and touching the arm of the older one. In moments, two names and a bit of information about them appeared in his mind, "Tommy and Tubbo hm?" He snorted as he gathered a piece of information, "Orphans. Of course. There really is nobody more generous and utterly foolish than those who know what it feels like to have nothing and nobody, hm?" Chuckling to himself, he withdrew his hand and took a few moments to examine the two teens. He finally sighed, heart-squeezing as he watched the younger shiver and scoot closer to the older, a strong gust of chilling wind blowing past. Their clothes were far too thin for the weather, even during the day and especially in the evening.

"Just because you never asked for anything doesn't mean I can't give you two something's as thanks..." He muttered before waving his hand, red eyes flashing as his magic worked. A soft blue tear-shaped jewel appeared in his palm, and he carefully slipped the item into Tubbo's palm.

"A heart of the sea in jewel form... Use it wisely, keep it near, and when it comes time you two will know to use it...but remember, you must control it. Not the other way around." He waved his hand again, this time a small pocket-sized compass appearing. He pressed it in Tommy's hand, "And a compass that will guide you to the answers to your questions. But remember, not all the answers you'll get are what you will have wanted to hear or know."

Slowly, Techno stood and unclipped his cape. Stepping to the side, he draped it over the two teens,

the thick velvet material more than enough to keep them warm in the chilly weather. He could retrieve it later, or just summon a new one.

Walking back around, he picked up the plate and jar- giving the pair one last glance.

"I have an odd feeling I'll be meeting you two again..."

With that, the world around him faded back onto his cabin on "The Manhunt", walking to the desk and setting the items down.

Someone cleared their throat behind him, and he glanced to see Dream standing in the doorway. His arms crossed and eyes narrowed in a hardened glare, Techno sighed and turned to the fairy.

"Alright Techno...Lets fucking talk."

As Vurb locked up the shop, he heard muffled yelling from the backrooms. Sighing, he rolled his eyes and walked towards the back of the shop. The shop doubled as him and his team's headquarters, having their bedrooms upstairs and living quarters in the backroom. As he opened the door, he was greeted by the sight of Tap standing across the table from Zelk, leaning forward with his hands on the table. He had a pissed expression, and it was clear that he wasn't happy about something.

"STOP. SAYING. THAT!!"

Zelk chuckled, cloth moving across the sword in his lap casually, "Saying what, Tappy~?"

"That! That stupid name thing!"

"What? Tappy?"

"No!! The combina-"

Deciding to put an end to this, Vurb cleared his throat with a deadpan expression. Instantly he had the other's attention, looking to him expectantly.

"We got a recruiter." At that, Tap straightened up, arms crossed, "What's the job?"

Vurb walked over to the table, holding up the small pink sea shell, "This guy named Skeppy. He's in the Navy- a captain."

Tap immediately sneered, eyes narrowing at Vurb as he became instantly defensive, "A Navy captain? Are you kidding me?"

"Tap, let Vurb finish-" Zelk tried to speak up, but was immediately brushed off by Tap, "Are we really this fucking desperate that we are taking a contract from Navy Scum?!" Vurb flinched back at Tap's voice, ears flattening back, "Tap-"

"When we started this business, we made one agreement Vurb. No matter what, we were not going to help anybody in the Navy! You know what they fucking do- you've seen it with your own eyes, both of you! They- they are **murderers** ! Ruthless, selfish, greedy bastards who do nothing but take, pillage, murder, and tear families apart-" Tap slammed his fist on the table, his words spat with venom, "Vurb, you used to be fucking enslaved by those bastard's and were almost executed by them!! Zelk-"

There was the slam and suddenly Tap was silenced by the tip of Zelk's sword pressed under his chin. The once teasing, docile man's face was blank of expression but his eyes were full of rage.

"One more word and I will fucking skin you slowly, and painfully. I fucking dare you." His voice was shaky, breathing unsteady. Vurb whined softly and touched Zelk's wrist, pressing it down, "Zelk, calm down. Don't do anything you are going to regret."

Zelk's wrist slowly followed where Vurb pushed it before he brang it back to himself, taking deep breaths. He murmured a soft apology to Tap before turning to pick up his chair, and the other male's face softened.

"It...it's fine Zelk. It was my fault- bringing that up was..." He sighed, "It was uncalled for. I was just being an ass..." He pinched the bridge of his nose before looking at Vurb, "I'm sorry to you too, V. I've just been...no, that's no excuse. It's been rough and stressful for all of us."

Zelk set his chair back up and sat down again.

Sensing everyone calming down, Vurb continued, "I know we said we would never help the Navy. This...this is the last thing I want to be doing but..." He chewed his bottom lip, "Guys, he's paying a lot. And this isn't a contract where we are going to kill anyone either- we are trying to help him locate someone and there are others he's hired to help. He's not even using navy funds to hire us- it's all his own, so I don't think the Navy is backing him here..."

He held the sea shell in hands, and as he blinked his eyes glowed bright blue- shining like diamonds. He set it on the table, keeping one finger on it.

"He seems genuine but...this shell is apparently a belonging given to him by the person he's trying to find. I'm going to use it to find out more about this person- just to see if this is a good idea."

"But, you need our energies?" Zelk spoke up again. Vurb nodded, and without hesitation the other two reached and set one finger each on it. In an instant, the werewolf felt a rush of electricity in his veins. He felt the memories attached to the shell slowly start mending together, the world around him melting away and his body becoming numb.

When the world formed back around him, he was in a forest. Rays of sunlight shown down through the green leaves of tall trees. Vurb stood by the bank of a river, looking down it.

"Geppy! Look what I found!!"

He heard the voice of a child and turned to it, seeing two young boy's standing by the river. One he recognized as the younger version of that man, Skeppy- and the other the younger version of the person they were looking for.

The little boy showed Skeppy something in his hands, and looking closely he could see it appeared to be a baby duckling. Skeppy looked at it in complete wonder, eyes sparkling in interest, "It's just so...small, Bad!"

"I know, right?!"

"Can I hold it?"

The other boy nodded eagerly and Skeppy held out his hands, gently taking the baby duck and holding it in front of his face.

"Oh my Amu...it's so cute..."

"Mhm!!"

After a few seconds, the pair jumped as the duckling made a noise.

The two looked with wide eyes, glancing at each other in surprise. Slowly, a grin stretched across

Skeppy's face as he mimicked the noise, "Quack."

Bad snorted, giggling and repeating it back, "Quack."

Duckling forgotten, Skeppy set it back on the ground as they went back and forth- slowly descending into more and more giggles. Eventually, Bad broke into peels of laughter- the sound so infectious it sent Skeppy himself into a laughing fit.

"C'mere you dummy!!"

Skeppy was pulled towards the other, the two of them laying on the river bank in a fit of laughter.

Vurb felt his heart warm at the sight, and he smiled.

"I've seen enough..."

With that, He felt Tap and Zelk remove their fingers from the shell- the loss of life force pulling Vurb back to the present.

As the world pieced itself together around Vurb, he realized there were warm tears slipping down his face. Tap and Zelk both looked at him in concern, and he smiled shakily.

"We're taking the contract."

Sheer Cliffs & Open wounds

Chapter Notes

For those who don't know, here's my tumblr centered around this book! I've posted Skeppy's design, and now Bad's human and Siren forms too!
<https://fantasticalbee.tumblr.com/>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As his eyes fluttered open, the first thing Tommy noticed was how dark it was. He shot up in surprise, looking to the sky to see the moon still rising over the moonlit ocean, "Fuck-!" He cursed, his outburst waking up Tubbo. The pale blonde whined softly, yawning and stretching tiredly as he lazily observed in his surroundings. Tommy lifted his hand, only to hear a metal clank. His eyesight shot down and immediately he was startled by the velvet red cape draped over them. Then, he scrambled to pick up the item he had dropped, looking at it. It was a gold compass, the arrow inside made of silver and rubies encrusted into it, "Who the fuck-?!" He flipped it over in his hands, trying to find a name on it. As he looked at the back, he was shocked to find his own name engraved into the gold plating.

"No, no this has to be a prank- this-" He pushed the cloak off, shaking his head, "This isn't mine!"

"Woah..." He looked at Tubbo, who was wide awake and now admiring a small tear-shaped jewel in his palm as it glowed a bit in the moonlight, "It's so cool-"

"And not ours!" Tommy countered, internally panicking. He'd stolen before, sure- but never such priceless and lavish looking items! Just bits of bread, apples- gods, never items that looked like they were worth his and Tubbo's lives combined! It didn't matter if they were innocent or children- these items would surely get him and Tubbo arrested and hanged!

"We- We have to hide these somewhere safe and get back to the orphanage. Quickly." He grabbed the cloak and balled it up, tucking it under his arm and gesturing to Tubbo, who still sat entranced by the jewel. The young boy could feel it buzz in his palm, almost throbbing and beating like a heart. It looked like something out of their storybooks, and suddenly it hit him.

"The offerings." He scrambled up and immediately began searching around the statue. Tommy groaned, "Tubbo you cannot be serious-"

"They're gone!! The offerings are gone!" The boy shouted in happiness, running to Tommy and bouncing on his heels, "Tommy these are gifts! In return for our offerings!" The other boy scoffed, "So you're saying TechnoBlade- The god of war, anger, and all things prideful and violent- gave two random kids super expensive gifts, just because they offered him some honeycomb and a jar of honey?"

"I know it sounds dumb but think about it! These things came out of nowhere- your name engraved in one of them-" There were Tubbo's psychic powers again, "and the offerings are gone! What other explanation is there!"

"That someone stole our offerings and planted these on us, Tubbo!"

"But why?!"

Tommy opened his mouth, but nothing came. After a few moments, it dawned on him that Tubbo was right. Nobody was ever after them- there was no reason behind framing them for anything. Nobody could gain anything from it.

He sighed in frustration, "Look- regardless, we need to hide these. We'll look suspicious otherwise."

"Okay..."

The two boys headed off into the night, running to the edge of the forest before locking hands, gripping tightly onto each other. The buddy system was important when running through the forest- especially at night, when the place was at its most dangerous. The pair knew the path well, years becoming accustomed to every tree, rock, and natural marking along it flowing through their veins and controlling their movements- but none of that mattered to the forest itself, and anything could happen. They saw the end of the hill appearing over the hill and turned, running in the trees along the tall cliffs of the ocean, until they saw the entrance of the path of their familiar cove. They ran to the entrance and let go of each other- the entrance only being a crevice just large enough for the two of them to slip in. The entrance was just the start of the challenge. Tubbo and him had made this place their stash and a secret spot for a reason- and that was because it was hard to reach, as well as hard to leave. A single slip up could mean death- but they had become accustomed to this path as well.

Tommy let Tubbo slip inside first before shoving in the bundled cloth, letting Tubbo pull it in with him.

Tommy took a quick look around before following, having silently sworn he'd heard voices. As he slipped into the tunnel and crawled through, he began to shiver. The wetness of tides crashing against the cliffs and getting into the crevice was still clinging to the stones, making Tommy nervous for the challenging part. He exited and stood up in the cave, seeing Tubbo making sure to carefully wrap up the items in the velvet cloak before slipping it into a crevice- hidden in the shadows of the wall alongside a large box the two of them had stashed their earnings from working at the docks. The broken colored bottles hanging on the walls and collected items trembled violently as there was a roll of thunder. The two of them nodded and headed to the exit, Tubbo crawling through the exiting crevice first, and Tommy following again.

His heart sank as he heard thunder again, his surrounding's vibrating. It was far too dangerous to cross the rope bridge now. In the dead of night too-

But this was the only way out. The crevice they entered in through was too tight to leave through, so this truly was the only mildly safe way.

As Tommy emerged from the cave, he looked forward and his stomach felt like it was sinking. Tubbo had somehow paled more at the sight, seeing storm clouds rolling in and sheets of rain pouring down on the slippery rock path.

"The bridge..."

Tommy's eyes flickered to the bridge, eyes widening as he saw it was snapped on one side- hanging down like a ladder on the other side of the large gap. As soon as Tommy had his feet firmly on the ground, he reached and intertwined his hand with Tubbo's again. He could sense the other's fear, the same as his own.

"What are we going to do?"

Tubbo murmured, voice shaky. Tommy took a deep breath, "We...we have to jump, Tubbo."

The younger whimpered, gripping Tommy's hand tighter in his own. There was a strong gust of wind and a crack of thunder, like a whip through the air as the two stared at the slippery path. The older took a deep breath, squeezing Tubbo's hand in his own, "I'll go first..." Tubbo looked at him like he was crazy, "Pray to whatever god's there are- if they exist- that I make it."

"And if you don't make it?"

Tommy swallowed dryly, trembling, "I fall, I guess..."

Looking at his friend in surprise, Tubbo looked terrified as he clamped down on Tommy's arm, "Tommy-"

"Its the only way Tubbo- just...just trust me."

There were a few moments of silence, so quiet that for a second the only thing the two could swear all they could hear was their pounding heartbeats in the beating rain.

"Please Tommy..." Tubbo's voice broke, hands shaking as he pulled Tommy into a tight hug, "Please...please make it..." Tommy hugged him back, "No promises..."

Once they separated, the younger backed away and Tommy turned to the large gap. He planned out the steps in his head silently- if he jumped too early he'd undershot it but too late and he'd overshot and slip up, potentially making him fall over the side.

Getting down, he focused on the jump- but found himself frozen in place. His wet hair and clothes stuck to his skin from the freezing rain, body trembling in fear, and heart-racing at a million miles per hour in his chest. What was he thinking? He wasn't brave or a hero. He didn't want to die...

"Jump. I'll help you."

Tommy's eyes widened as he heard a woman's voice- soft and delicate as the warmth began filling his core and spreading like tendrils through his body.

He focused on the other side, and for a moment he swore he could see a woman on the other side- peeking out at him from behind some rocks in the path. He could make out long, blonde hair and peach skin- but nothing more.

For some reason, he suddenly felt calm- confidence filling him as he focused back on the ledge, the freezing rain pounding down harder, waves crashing furiously against the cliff, wind howling and lightning illuminating the sky as thunder crashed. Tommy took off, running towards the ledge.

His feet hit the very edge.

He lunged for the other side, hand outstretched to grab the cliff.

His hands grabbed the edge, and he made it.

Tommy scrambled up onto the ledge, panting as he pulled himself up and laughing in disbelief- every inch of him filled with adrenaline. He turned to Tubbo as he stood, seeing the other boy cheering happily. He called out over the rain, "Cmon Tubbo! Your turn!!"

Tubbo paused, his cheering dying in his throat and once again replaced with fear. He shook his

head, and Tommy's smile faltered.

"You have to jump- I'll be here to catch you, I promise!"

"You promise?!"

Tommy nodded, and Tubbo's icy blue eyes remained on him as he outstretched his arms, "Trust me, Tubbo. Have I ever lied to you?"

The younger seemed to think about this, before shaking his head again.

"Then why would I lie now? You'll make it and I'll catch you. On my count, okay? At 2 you run, at 1 you jump to me."

Slowly, Tubbo nodded, getting into a runner's position.

"3!" Tommy called, adrenaline still coursing in his veins, "2!" Tubbo began to run towards the edge, "1! Jump!" His foot hit the edge.

He jumped.

Tommy's eyes widened, veins coursing with what felt like molten lava as he realized Tubbo had undershot. Tubbo screamed in time with Tommy, panic filling both of them and the boy reached out further out-

Their fingers grazed, but ultimately missed as Tubbo plummeted.

There was a cracking noise as Tubbo managed to grab one of the broken boards at the last second- hanging on and just barely avoiding plummeting into the frigid, angry waves below.

"Tubbo!!!"

Tommy got on his stomach, desperately trying to grab the other from where he was. The creaking of wood told Tommy there wasn't any time to waste to save Tubbo, "Tommy help!!!" The other cried, clearly panicking as he held on. Tommy looked around frantically, trying to find some way to reach Tubbo and pull him up.

There was the sound of bare feet running towards him, and he jumped as a freezing hand touched his shoulder. He looked to see a young woman having run-up- with the same peach skin and strawberry blonde hair as he saw earlier. She wore a long white dress, and almost had a glow to her as she got on her knees, reaching down to Tubbo without a single word. Her hand met his and she slowly began to pull him up. Relieved, Tommy didn't question it, reaching and grabbing Tubbo's other hand and helping to heave him back over the edge.

As soon as he was over the edge he wrapped his arms around Tommy's shoulders, trembling violently as broken sobs left him. Tommy hugged Tubbo closer, holding back his tears, "I told you you'd make it, S-see?"

Tubbo didn't respond, the two of them refusing to let go of each other. Tommy went to glance at the woman- trying to thank her- but was silently baffled to find her having vanished into thin air.

Great, another mystery to add to the endless slew of them.

He gripped the back of Tubbo's shirt, taking deep breaths as the adrenaline finally left his system- calming his heart again. He began to shiver again, the cold encasing his body again as he shook

Tubbo gently, "W-we need to get back to the orphanage- we can't stay here..."

"O-okay..."

Getting up, the two of them trudged their way's back to the orphanage in the freezing rain.

Techno sighed once more, "Don't you have a Prince to attend to?"

"George is asleep, and it's none of your business anyway." The pair stared at each other, like two animals challenging the other to attack. The tension in the room felt thick enough to cut through with a knife and Techno hated it.

It had been 57 years, there was really no need for this- yet it seemed Dream still held a grudge over nothing. Trying to lighten the mood, Techno picked up the plate of honeycomb's once more and offered it to the Fae. Dream still had a sweet tooth, right? Most Fae did...

"Some sweets to go with that sour expression of yours?" He quipped. The only response he got was the blonde's expression souring further, and he rolled his eyes in irritation- putting down the plate rather roughly.

"Dream, what the hell is this hostility anyway? Is it that you couldn't handle a part of my past that will never go away?! or no, was it that you couldn't handle me?!" Techno snapped. He'd had it with the hostility from the fairy in such a short span of time- especially since he felt he was undeserving of the treatment. Dream looked taken aback by his anger, eyes narrowing on the other, "This isn't about me-"

"No, but it's about me, isn't it?!" Techno narrowed his eye's, "Or maybe it's because of-"

Dream tensed, quickly cutting him off, "Don't even start!! This isn't about me, or you, or *anything* we used to be- this is about you conveniently butting your way into my crew when you're not wanted here just because you're "bored"!" He barked, voice full of venom, "Just because you're a god doesn't mean you can go where you fucking please and walk all over everyone else!!"

"Actually, it precisely means that. It's just a matter of if I use my power to do it or not." Techno tried to lower his voice again, struggling to reign himself in. Dream scoffed, "You've got the answer for everything, don't you?"

"Well, not everything- but most things, yes." Techno quipped, only realizing his mistake when he swore he could see practically a vein in Dreams forehead popping, "You arrogant fucking-"

"Dream." Techno tried to get the blonde's attention.

"You think you can just fucking waltz in here-" Dream grabbed the hilt of his blade, drawing it and marching towards the god. Techno remained calm, knowing even if the fae stabbed him he'd be fine.

"Dream."

"And act like you fucking own this place?!? You think you can just make yourself at home where

you're not welcome-!!" He swung, and Techno just barely caught his wrist before the blade struck him.

"Chelem. Calm. Down." He spoke evenly and firmly, eyes meeting Dream's as there was a spark of recognition.

As Dream was knocked on his ass again, Techno barked an order, "Up. Again!" Dream groaned, grabbing his sword and getting up shakily to face Techno once more, his entire body aching from head to toe. There was a popping and ripping sound and he cried out, grinding his teeth as he felt warm liquid trickling down his leg. The other man glanced down and froze, getting out of his defensive position and sheathing his sword, "Forget it. Sword down."

"No- no no no we can- I'm fine-"

"No you're not. Your stitches broke and you're bleeding, now put your sword down."

Dream unwillingly gave in, dropping the sword and collapsing in exhaustion, legs and arms numb from the pain. Techno walked over, kneeling beside him. He looped his arms around his back and under his legs, picking him up with surprising ease.

The world was blurry as he was carried, feeling himself be put on a bed. His leg was throbbing in pain now, and he felt dizzy from blood loss. Feeling a cold, damp cloth dab at his wound, he hissed in pain. The god hummed, "You did better today."

"I-i did?" Dream spoke through clenched teeth as Techno tended to the open wound, "Mhm. Don't get me wrong, you're still shit- but you've gotten a tad bit better." Dream snorted, letting out a strained laugh, "A-asshole- Fuck!" He cried out as the needle punctured his skin, Techno pinching the skin together to sew it. It was only a few stitches, but it did the trick.

"I think you need to take a break from this- you're pushing yourself too hard when you're barely healed."

"No-" Dream slowly tried to sit up as Techno finished, cutting the thread.

"Chelem..." Techno's tone was softer and he put his hand on Dream's thigh- just below the wound, "Chelem, look at me..." Dream didn't look at him, refusing. Techno reached forward, blood-stained hand cupping Dream's cheek and making him look at him.

"I know you want to learn. But you won't learn anything by doing this when you're still far from fully healed- even more so when you're pushing yourself way past your limit." Dream was silent, but he knew Techno was right.

"Fine...I'll take a break to heal some more..."

"Good. You need one, Chelem..."

Dream yanked his arm back, glaring at Techno, "Do. not. call me that."

"I had to- you weren't responding to anything else."

"Just..." Dream seemed thrown off, but as he took a deep breath to calm down, he put away his

sword, "I finally have something here, Devlin." Techno felt his mouth dry at the mention at his name, "I don't want it ruined. Not again. So if you *care*? " He turned to the door, walking off, "Then don't ruin it and leave. or if you don't want to leave- at least be useful around here." Without waiting for a response, Dream left. Techno stood there, only hearing the quiet creaking of the wooden planks and Dreams steps fading away.

He tsked, shaking his head- blinking away the forming tears in his eyes.

"When are you going to learn I'm not your enemy, Dream..."

Chapter End Notes

Rule 1 with me: If I give you lots of fluff, its probably because the next chapter will hurt.

Bittersweet Kisses & Riddles for answers

Chapter Notes

You might need tissues for this one folks.

TW for Graphic depictions of violence, Beheading, Whipping, and Burning at the stake.

As they walked down the path, they continued talking. A simple, silly game of 20 questions.

"What's your favorite color?"

"Hm...Orange, like- sunset orange. Favorite food?"

"Well...I haven't tried a lot of different human foods, so...sea slugs are pretty good siren and mermaid food-"

"Sea slugs?!" Sapnap laughed, scrunching up his nose as he made a gagging noise, "Gross!"

"Hey, they are slimy but they aren't that bad!!" Bad huffed, "but as for human food I really like muffins and just pastries in general..."

"Why is that not a surprise?"

"Hm?"

"The sweet thing likes sweet things." Bad snorted, rolling his eyes, "Really?"

"Okay, not one of my best..." Sapnap shrugged, snickering softly. He shivered as a cool breeze passed, pulling the wool fleece over his shoulders a bit more. As a result of his momentary plunge into the water earlier, his clothes were freezing- sticking to his skin a bit uncomfortable. Copying him, Bad did the same with his fleece as well. Despite his natural form being able to easily live in freezing depths, his human form was just as susceptible to getting cold as any other human.

"Your turn."

"Uh...Do you play any instruments?"

"Oh- yea actually. Violin!" Bad looked at Sapnap, noticing a glimmer of satisfaction in his eyes with he spoke about it, his chest puffing up a bit in pride with a confident smirk, "I play pretty well if I do say so myself!" Bad smiled, deciding to keep it going. It was oddly rare he saw the other man so excited about something, "Who taught you? I read in books that lessons for such things are very expensive- only for the upper class..."

"My godfather- hey!" Sap stopped, pouting, "That's two questions!" Bad's smile widened mischievously and he tilted his head, "It is?"

"You sneaky fish!"

Bad laughed at the remark, "Okay okay- you can ask two questions in return."

Sapnap bit his lip, two questions biting at his insides, "Well..." Should he? It wasn't really his business but the question had been gnawing at him for quite a while.

Silently, he agreed to himself that if Bad didn't want to answer, he wouldn't push. But for now, he wanted to ask more than anything.

"Your captor. Why do you defend him so much and who is he?" His tone was careful, knowing full well that he was treading on the hot coals of a sensitive subject. The siren froze, blinking, "O-oh...That...those are some uh...interesting questions you've chosen..." He trailed off, quiet. Sapnap immediately began to regret his decision, "You don't have to answer if you don't want to-"

"No- no it's fine..." He was silent for a few more seconds before he finally turned to the other man with a hesitant, faltering smile.

"Where do you want me to start?"

"W...whenever you want to, I guess..."

He took a deep breath, "Alright...Well first, he wasn't really my captor. He was my friend- my best friend in fact." Bad started, only for Sapnap to butt in, "Best friends keep each other under lock and key?" He said skeptically, a single brow raised. Bad sent him a scowl and he faltered, "Sorry..."

Brushing off the harmless comment, he continued, "I met him before he met me..." As Bad spoke, his memory trailed off to that night.

The large, grand vessel was painted white and built to be only the finest of ships. The sound of tens and hundreds of voices onboard the ship rang in the air, chit-chat, laughter, howls of joy-

Bad knew what they were doing.

This was a celebrating feast, yet what they were celebrating Bad didn't know. Human traditions were always a mystery to him- the way they moved, communicated, ate...

It was so curious to Bad. He knew mermaids and sirens had celebrations too, but both were vastly different. Human celebrations were even more vastly different, and the ideas of what they would do and why had always fascinated the young siren.

But one thing drew him to this one ship in particular, and that was the sight of a boy presumably his age- maybe 8 or 9- dancing and laughing alongside the others. He had the darkest black hair and soft looking tan skin, skinny and fairly average height to his peers. Bad clung to the side of the boat, peeking between the rails to spy onboard the ship with insatiable curiosity. He watched as the boy danced and twirled along with the others, laughter infectious enough to make even Bad start to giggle despite not even knowing what was so funny. The boy had the biggest blue eyes that sparkled like diamonds, and a large, beaming smile with dimples to match. His eyes contained a joy and wonderment for the world around him that Bad longed for- like healthily kept childhood innocence. Bad had lost that so long ago and yearned to have something like it back.

If only the world wasn't so cruel to those like him...

The celebration would last a week, Bad knew that much. So for one week, he'd arrive at the boat at the dead of night- watching the boy dance until dawn- and then returning to the safety of the deep.

Until on the last night, he came to the ship in a roaring storm. He saw the ship sinking, and dread

overcame him. So with reckless abandon, he swam towards it, the spines of his tail soft and too underdeveloped to protect him. However, as he was not in his adult stage he was still almost pitch black, blending into the waters around him to his advantage. He knew full well the feeding frenzy of sirens that awaited in and around his path, but he was too focused to care. He searched the sinking ship until, to his relief, he found him.

The moment their eyes met, two vastly different worlds collided and intertwined. And in the years to come, a bond formed that was inseparable...

He saved him- the single lucky survivor of that terrible event...

"...and ever since then, he's been so determined to repay me for that. Not only that, but his family died in the attack. He was completely alone and that event had obvious traumatic effects on his mentality. He was so adamant in begging me to stay- and for some darn reason, I did... We were best friends for a while and then... I ran." Bad didn't meet Sapnap's eyes, clearly ashamed of himself, "I ran because one day I looked at the world around me with clear eyes. I looked past the rose-colored lens we looked through and realized why we never would be able to stay together- why I would never be able to stay with him..." The siren was taking deep, shaky breaths, heart-squeezing painfully in his chest. All at once, it sunk into Sapnap- the exact meaning and implications of those words hitting too close to home for him.

"Bad..." He could see the sirens cheeks start to flush a rosy red, eye's glassy from tears and gaze distant as old memories of that day swirled in his mind...

It was early June, and as Skeppy and Bad walked along the bumpy dirt path to a house on the hill they played a little game, "I spy with my little eye... something red."

"Easy, cherries!" Skeppy snickered, "I still don't know why you like them so much, I swear its all you can think about right now!" He poked the siren's cheek playfully and Bad rolled his eyes, sticking his tongue at him, "They're good okay?! And the sweet cherry trees around us are all ripe for picking right now!" He gestured around the path, where there were indeed cherry trees full of ripened sweet cherries just waiting to be picked.

"Mmmmm pretty sure its just your sweet tooth talking, but okay..." The two walked hand-in-hand- though Bad found it a bit comedic how his hands were a bit smaller in the other boys. Years ago their hands were the same size, but as they grew they obviously changed.

Years ago... Bad's mind drifted a bit. How long had they stuck together now? When they met Bad was 8 and Skeppy was 9- but it had been years since, and now they were teenagers at 17 and 18. It was hard to believe they had survived for so long with only each other to depend on- sleeping on the streets and just barely managing to scrape together at least a meal a day. Skeppy worked at the dock helping with hauls of goods- putting he was barely paid a shilling an hour. Meanwhile, Bad sang on the streets for money- but not many people in the small town had money to spare on what they considered lowlife sub-par entertainment.

It was little, but they made do- and Bad was grateful for that.

"Hello Mr. Vickin!" Skeppy's voice pulled Bad from his thoughts, realizing they had made it to their destination, " 'Ello boys! How are ya?" The old man waved at the two teenage boys as Skeppy unhooked the rickety wooden garden gate, letting Bad in behind him and re-hooking it. The old man smiled at them as he straightened his thick round-rimmed glasses. Mr. Vickin had used to be a fisherman but later retired quiet and unmarried. He lived in a little cottage a ways from the

village, atop a cliff overlooking the calm sea. He was an old gangly man with wispy white hair and tattered moth-eaten clothes, with a reputation in the village for being the cranky old-timer everyone couldn't wait to drop dead.

Everyone, except for the two washed-up street urchins who had slithered their way into his icy, sea-salt crusted heart, "We're good, you?"

"Knee's a wobblin, back achin' like tha' devil an' bones creakin' just the same ya lil' thief!"

Bad giggled at the nickname, knowing exactly where it had come from. The reason they had ever met Mr. Vickin was because Skeppy stole one of his pumpkin pies off the window-sill once, but the two felt so guilty after eating it they went back to fess up, and Mr. Vickin made them tend to the garden to make it up to him. They'd bonded in that time, and Mr. Vickin was like a grandpa to them- even if they were still street urchins in the end. The old man baked them filling treats in exchange for garden work and a bit of friendly company over chess or tea, a trade the two were happy to make...

Bad will never forget the day that changed everything, though.

It was not long after his 17th birthday- Skeppy being 18 now. He was on the ladder, picking the cherries from the plentiful cherry trees. Skeppy held the ladder under him, taking the baskets when they got too full and handing him another one. Mr. Vickin sat in his rocking chair, watching them and chatting back and forth. Suddenly, something just felt off to Bad. He looked toward the village as he heard distant shouts, and was surprised to see people bunching in a large crowd. They were following a large group of marching Navy soldiers, but Bad could not see why.

"Mr. Vickin? What's going on down there..."

The old man looked and his expression darkened.

"Xisuma help us..." He murmured, before shakily getting up with his cane. He waved his hand to have them follow him as he trekked towards his dirt road to town. Curious, Bad got down and the two followed him, "Mr Vickin? Is something wrong?"

The old man tisked, "Plenty. For starter's, it seems every Navy captain is a damned jelly-belly'd coxcomb. Secondly...well, it seems Henrik 'as finally had 'is dumb luck run out, and soon 'ell be dancin' the hempen jig..."

Bad and Skeppy looked at each other curiously, unsure what the old man meant before brushing it off and staying silent the rest of the walk.

When they reached the town center, it seemed like everyone was there. A victim of his own morbid curiosity, Skeppy grabbed Bad's hand and together they squirmed to the front. To their horror, there was a man tied to a pole, kneeling and pale. Whip marks covered his back, raw and bleeding.

There was a cry for them to stop, and Bad turned his attention to a strikingly beautiful young woman being held back by navy men.

"He's an innocent man!! He did nothing wrong, please!!" She sobbed, and immediately Bad recognized the telling traits of a human form mermaid. Her short red locks dripped with water and her voice was almost song-like, skin too perfect and unblemished to be of a human. Another man was held down beside her, screaming for them to take him instead and stop hurting the other.

There was the crack of a nine-tailed whip and the tied man screamed, sobbing in pain as more horrifying red lashes appeared on his back. Bad felt sick, tears stinging his eyes as a Navy captain

put up his hand and stepped in front of the woman and other man.

"Confess. Both of you, and we will consider sparing the boy." He gestured to the whipped man. The whipped man wheezed, his voice cracked and broken, "E-ell.....Hen...n-n-no..." The woman whispered softly, just loud enough for Bad to hear, "I'm sorry Charles..." She took a deep breath, looking the navy captain in the eye, "I, Ellinore Roselyn, confess to being a mermaid, and assisting Henrik Manning in his feats of robbery and treason..."

The captain turned to the man on the floor, "And you?"

The man hesitated before glancing at the whipped man, "I...I, Henrik Manning, confess to having harbored a..." He hesitated and looked to Ellinore, expression shifting to something of defiance, "helping and aiding a young mermaid in her journey. Not a dangerous creature."

"H-Henrik..."

"Henrik Manning, you are hereby sentenced to beheading for harboring a bloodthirsty water monster!"

"YOU ARE A FUCKING HYPOCRITE YOU MERMAID RAP-" A sharp kick was delivered to Henrik's jaw, shutting him up. The captain sneered, stepping on his head, "You were nothing by a petty thief, boy. And nothing would have changed that. You are nameless, infamous, and worth nothing." Bad jumped as many in the crowd shouted in agreement at the words. He paled further as Henrik was dragged toward a guillotine standing in the square not far from Charles, "As for you. Ellinore Roselyn, you are sentenced to be burnt at the stake for the drowning of multiple navy officers, and the usage of witchcraft!"

"I did no such thing!! I'm not a siren- get off me!!" The woman screamed, struggling as she was being dragged toward the tall wooden stake. The whipped man was untied and left laying there. Bad watched in heartstopping agony as he tried to start crawling towards Henrik, breaths labored and strained. He wasn't allowed that comfort though, and was grabbed by two soldiers that dragged him from the crowd.

"Charles Cavinoff, You are hereby stripped of your navy title and honor for harboring the fugitive thief Henrik Manning and a dangerous creature. You are lucky I'm being so merciful, lest I have you hanged." The captain walked away, and in a wave of his hand, everything was put in motion. There was another chilling scream as the rope was let go of and the blade of the guillotine went down. Skeppy was lost in horror as Henrik went limp, head falling in a basket and crimson blood spurting from his neck.

Bad, however, paid no attention to that- his eyes focused on the centerpiece of the horror.

Torches were dropped onto the hay at the foot of the wood pyre, and it quickly caught fire. The flames crept until they reached Ellinore's feet, screams and pleas to the gods leaving her as she began to burn. The world moved in slow motion for Bad, tears pricking his eyes. Red and orange flames danced across his vision, watching flesh and muscle char and melt from bone as blood-curdling screams echoed in his ears. He didn't even notice his own trembling or the hot, wet tears slipping down his cheeks, nor did he notice Skeppy's hand slip away from his. A deep pit formed in his stomach. He had never felt more unwelcome or unwanted than he did at that moment, blood running cold as for once he realized the measure of the danger he was in.

The rose-tinted lens he saw through was ripped from him, and he scolded himself for ever thinking he had any potential of keeping Skeppy safe and alive while he was still there. Even Mr. Vickin was in danger with him around.

As long as he remained on land, in association with them- the two people he loved and cared for were in more danger of the fate in front of them than they even knew.

He needed to end this. He needed to leave and stay as far from Skeppy as possible. As if on cue, his hand was seized again and Skeppy tugged him back through the crowd and away, leaving in a rush. The two of them ran through the barren streets, far from the crowd before Bad snapped out of it, "Skeppy..."

The other boy didn't respond.

"Skeppy."

No response, but he began to slow as they reached the docks- taking deep breaths of fresh air.

"Skeppy!!" He snapped and the other boy stopped, looking at Bad with a determined expression, "You promised Bad. You promised, I promised, we-"

"I know I promised but please this- this isn't safe, We are not safe! We can't keep doing this..." His voice broke as he looked at the water, "We need to go our separate ways..."

"No!" Skeppy snapped, taking Bads face in his hands gently and making him look at him, "We are safe! I'm making sure of that- you aren't leaving me alone please I can't be alone-" His tone shifted to frantic pleading as he shook his head, and it twisted the knife in Bad's chest. The siren never felt more guilty, Skeppy's hands slipping down to his upper arms, "You won't be alone, you have Mr. V..."

"He's not the same and you know why Bad!"

Bad's heart stopped. No- no god, he wouldn't be able to push himself to leave if Skeppy meant what he...

"Skep..."

"Please..." His eyes were pleading with Bad, hands having a slight tremble. Skeppy gave him a broken smile, voice uneven, "A little cottage in the woods, remember? Just you and me...a garden full of roses and peonies and- and lilies...we'd get a farm, and a horse we'd name Roberto...a puppy too..." Bad felt his heart beating in his chest so loudly, eyelids growing heavy. There was a rush of something warm in his body, feeling the other's warm breath mingling with his own. Skeppy's right hand went down to touch Bad's free hand again, their palms pressing together and fingers spreading in sync till they interlaced. Bad swore he could feel Skeppy's pulse through his palm, and his breath hitched at the feeling of Skeppy's warm hand brush his bangs away slightly to cup his cheek. He kept screaming in his mind no, but everything else in him edged him forward into this entanglement.

*"Bad, theres so much i'm unsure of. I-i'm unsure if we'll have something to eat tomorrow, if we'll find a place to sleep, how many shillings I'll make tomorrow- I don't even know if we will ever be able to escape poverty and make something of ourselves," Skeppy's voice was incredibly soft and hushed, like this was a secret he only wanted Bad to hear, "But...there are somethings in my life I **am** sure of. And one is that I want to spend my life with you, Halo."*

*Bad's felt his heart stop, "Siren, Mermaid- I don't care about that or what anyone else says." He pressed his forehead to Bads, eyes glassy with tears and a gentle, shaky smile on his lips, "I know this is risky to even say. I know what could happen to me- to **us** if we're found out. But for all its worth, I don't fucking care. I'd happily die by your side to any brutal fate if it meant I could have the chance to love you and be with you- no matter how long." A soft laugh-like huff left him, "I*

*don't know if I drank some weird love potion, or if you have a spell on me- or **maybe it's just you...*** " He swallowed, voice strained as Bad could see a single glimmering tear rolling down his cheek, "Hell, I don't even know if you even love me back- and if you don't, that's fine. You...you aren't obligated too." His voice cracked a slight bit, and Bad could feel the others hand start to tremble, breathing shaky and uneven as if he was holding back tears, "B-but...the only thing I know for certain is that I love you, Halo. And...and I don't think I could stop loving you even if I tried..."

Silence overtook them, and Skeppy let his eyes close- seemingly ready to accept rejection. Against his own will, the siren felt himself lean forward almost instinctively, his head tilting the slightest bit.

Their lips met, softly and careful at first as Bad's heart felt like it was going to burst. Skeppy's eyes flew open in surprise before quickly fluttering shut and reciprocating the kiss. The siren couldn't think straight, lips beginning to move against Skeppy's in slowly increasing fever. It was like he'd waited years for this- and in honesty, he had. He'd wanted this from the moment they'd met, and in this second it all felt so perfect and right. He could feel the need to go- to leave and never come back- completely draining from him, his imagination running wild with what life could be like with Skeppy. The little cottage, the farm, the garden, the horse-

There was nothing he could do against his every sense pulling him in further, free-hand gripping the front of Skeppy's shirt and pulling him closer as he gave in. Skeppy tasted oddly like caramel, his scent being a familiar earthy smell with hints of sea-salt. The rose-tinted lens he'd removed slowly started to slip back on again. He'd spent years of his life on land, all for one person...

They pulled apart, their lungs burning slightly for air as their breaths left in short pants.
"I...I love you too but..."

Then he caught a whiff of smoke, and behind his eyes, he could see it.

The flames at his feet, burning him alive. Skeppy head rolling to the ground, blood spurting from his neck. The petrified look on his face as the blood would drain, the life from those beautiful blue eyes being snuffed in an instant. The thoughts made his stomach churn, and the lens's were ripped off once more.

He couldn't stay any longer. He couldn't play with Skeppy's feelings like this. Accepting this and staying with him could only be signing his death warrant- a nail in the coffin.

Bad heard himself whimper as he looked into the other boy's eyes- trying to dedicate them to memory. He didn't ever want to forget them. Skeppy's eyes were cloudy in that moment- dazed and unfocused as he looked at him, "But...?"

"I-i'm sorry...I can't let you risk yourself like this for me."
"W-wha-"

Surprisingly it doesn't take much force to push Skeppy away, the other boy stumbling over his own feet and falling back in a daze. He doesn't seem to comprehend what Bad means until the siren is running towards the water- blocking out his desperate calls and pleas to stop and please- **please** come back. He needs him. He'll do anything-

But Bad's shirt is already wrestled off and he's jumping in the water. For a moment, the salty water stings as it pricks his eyes, the sea frigid around him. He'd almost forgotten how cold it could be. He can feel himself changing, and it's such an odd feeling after so long- his skin turning Payne's grey and legs melding into a tail that was black as coal with splotches of red, decorated with

deadly red spines. As first, he can't move his tail- numb and unfeeling. He feels like he's suffocating.

Then, theres a rush of oxygen gasped through his gills and heat in his tail. He flicks his tail once. Twice.

And he's off- propelling himself through the water with powerful beats of his tail. He's refusing to look back as he can hear Skeppy's cries from behind him, knowing if he did he would see the other's heartbroken form he'd never be able to bring himself to leave again.

'He will be fine...' Bad tries to convince himself, as he swims past the docked ships and passed the sandbar- reaching the drop-off. It's been so long since he'd been so far out, and there's a lingering sense of homesickness that he'd long since pushed down.

'He'll find someone else. He'll move on- he'll learn to forget...' Bad stops, suddenly unsure of his own words. Would Skeppy learn to forget? Would he move on...? The other was unbelievably stubborn and relentless about some things...

He was going to have to, because as long as Bad could potentially put him in danger he would never be coming back.

"I...I just left him there, Sap. I left him dazed, and confused, and so heart-broken right after he poured out his entire heart to me and I- I-i kissed him without even thinking too! How could I have done that?" He can feel the tears slipping, trembling, "I was hoping so badly he would know to move on, but instead he joined the Navy just to try and find me! He is going to get himself killed like this but I...I can't bring myself to tell him what he's doing...that it's not okay..." He sniffled, thinking back to Skeppy's face when their eyes met again years after Bad had run away. He whimpered, the knife in his heart twisting further, "Skeppy is a good person- he really is...but he's misguided and desperate, and that desperation is my fault..." He doesn't continue, and its obvious he doesn't want to acknowledge or say why. Almost as if in denial.

Making sure he's done, Sapnap waits for a few before speaking up, "I'm...I'm so sorry, Bad..." He held out a hand, expecting Bad to take it and hold it- but jumped as Bad pulled him into a tight hug, face buried in his collarbone as he broke down in tears. Sapnap relaxed after realizing, arms wrapping around Bad tightly and his hand rubbing circles in the sirens back to comfort him, "I know it can be hard...leaving behind those you love and care for just to protect them- it's so incredibly heartbreaking, even worse when they don't give up and you can't seem to make them understand." He spoke soothingly, hearing quiet whimpers and soft sobs leave Bad, "I've...I've been there. I know how you feel, and trust me with this: Running away isn't going to solve anything. I tried, and it didn't work. You can't try to explain once and give up if they don't understand you that one time. You can't just run without explanation either, because everything comes full circle eventually. It...it just doesn't work. It never does."

The siren didn't respond with anything but a soft nod, and they stood in silence as Bad let it out before trying to compose himself. When he finally did, they pulled back- picking up their small fleece blankets from the ground and brushing the dirt of them.

"T...thank you for that Sap. I...feel a bit better, now..." Sapnap put his hand on the sirens back, gaze soft and understanding, "It's no problem man...Now, let's get back to the ship, 'kay?" The siren wiped away his tears, sniffing, "We're gonna catch a cold like this, heh..." He chuckled weakly, Sapnap quietly snickering as well, "Exactly..."

They began to walk through the forest again- their game over and traded for peaceful silence.

When they finally got back to the orphanage, Tommy was immediately given an earful by the Misses. He doesn't care though- he's used to this treatment by now, having the reputation of a troublemaker in the orphanage didn't exactly make him the favorite. The misses shooed Tubbo off to a luke-warm drawn bath, but had Tommy use the bath of cold water. You would think he'd be peeved at this, but it's not the first time they'd plainly showed favoritism between them. At least they were merciful enough to simply provide a bath rather than send him to bed with no bath at all.

Eventually, he gets to bed with fresh night-wear and is immediately pulled closer to cuddle by Tubbo. He doesn't mind in the slightest- that was just a normal thing for them. Tommy often found comfort in having someone there, as he'd always found it harder to sleep alone anyway.

He draped his arm over the other, shutting his eyes as he tries to focus on sleeping.

Slowly, he drifted to sleep and the world melted around him- relaxed as his breathing steadied.

"You're back?"

Tommy's eyes snap open at the voice, the softness hauntingly familiar to him. His eyes are on the winged man before him, only this time he's standing. There are thick shackles clamped around his wrists and ankles, an abundance of long thick iron chains laying along the dirtied stone floor around him. The chains don't seem to hold him in place any longer, being definitely long enough to allow him to walk around the room. The ends of his chains met 4 large metal ringlets anchored to the floor. Tommy noted that his wingspan seems even larger now than before, despite being mostly furled inwards.

Tommy meets his eyes, and despite the warmth in the man's voice, his eyes are cold as ice- cutting into him like a dagger. He's looking at Tommy as if he's worth nothing more than the dirt on his feet, his aura no-longer welcoming and more like someone who was arrogant and wanted nothing to do with him, "Well? Are you just going to stare, or are you going to speak?" His voice was now a sneer, like he was offended that the teen even dared to be in his presence.

Tommy began to fume, his already pent up frustration boiling over, "What the hell is your deal? I haven't even fucking done anything and you are already acting like a dick!!"

The man seemed surprised, before laughing- but not like he thought Tommy was funny, like he was mocking him.

"Such an ignorant feisty little one, aren't you?!" He chortled, deep brown eyes with golden flecks narrowing on Tommy as he smirked, "Don't think that just because I wear these chains I'm safe to spur on, child."

Tommy snorted, crossing his arms and rolling his eyes, "Yea. Sure. You proved that well enough yesterday, against those guys. You got smacked around...what, 3 or 4 times?" He taunted back, trying to give the other a taste of his own medicine. The man's eyes widened and he glared hard at Tommy, the statement clearly striking a nerve, "You little cretin!!" He snapped, and Tommy's

stomach lurched as his ears rang from it. The man began to run at him, pupils shrinking as Tommy scrambled back in fear.

There was a loud clang as the chains pulled taut, just barely stopping the man from attacking him. His hands reached, tips of his claws just missing Tommy by a fraction of an inch. After a second of trying to reach he stumbled back and fell to his knees, shaking with rage as Tommy pressed hard against the wall away from him in fear.

'Long enough to allow him to walk, but not long enough to reach the walls...' Tommy observed to himself, making another mental note to himself.

*The man huffed out a growl, clearly trying to calm himself as he threads his fingers through his curly chocolate brown locks- gripping and pulling at them ever so slightly as he speaks through gritted teeth, "Why are you here..." Tommy blinked a few times before thinking and willing his heartbeat to steady. Why **was** he here? This was a dream right?*

When he spoke again, his tone was unsure, "I don't know...to ask you questions or some shit I guess? I do have a lot..." The man's eyes widened, mouth opening a bit as he gaped.

"Heh...hehe..." Slowly, he began to let out huffs of laughter again, louder and louder until he erupted into peels of psychotic laughter, throwing his head back as Tommy grew deeply unsettled. What had he said? He was sure it was reasonable and made sense, so what the fuck was this weirdo laughing about?

"You think you have the right to question the likes of me?! A pathetic thing like you???" He was cracking up as if Tommy was the most hilarious joke in the world, "What the fuck is that supposed to mean?!" He snapped, shaking. Tommy hated how weak he felt at that moment, faced with this fucking winged psychopath laughing at him.

"A puny ant! A pest, like a fucking mole!" He cackled, "It thinks it has the right to question me?! How much of a fucking dolt- a brainless moron- a buffon-!!!"

"Just tell me what I have to fucking do and stop making fun of me!! What do you want from me?!" The man stopped laughing immediately, head snapping to look at him with a large malicious smirk on his face. He stared at Tommy like he was staring into his soul.

"What do I want?" He chuckled, "I want us to play a fun game. I want you to earn your answers, so you have to answer my riddles first. With every correct one, I will answer one of your questions truthfully~"

The blonde paused. That...seemed fair enough...

"What's the catch?"

The man sniggered, "Get one wrong, and I get to rip you limb from limb~" He purred, and the blonde whimpered, swallowing thickly. He was good at riddles, right?

"O-okay..." The man perked up, eyes lighting up warmly again as he clapped his hands in excitement, "Oh goodie! It's been so many years since I've played a game!!" Tommy hesitated more, not liking how excited the man was- but he didn't know any way out of it, and he wanted answers. He took a few steps forward, toward the man.

"Just...give me the first riddle..." The man hummed, "Alright..."

***"Only one color, but not one size. Stuck at the bottom, yet easily flies."** Tommy noticed the man's*

voice seeming to echo around him, **"Present in sun, but not in rain...Doing no harm, and feeling no pain."** He bent forwards a bit, his voice hushed, **"What is it?"**

Tommy blinked, trying to think. He was sure he'd heard this riddle before...

He looked behind the man, and suddenly it clicked.

"A shadow."

The man looked surprised, pulling back a bit, "Thats...correct...hm..." Tommy grinned, "Now do I get to ask my question?"

"I...I suppose."

"What is this place?"

The man hummed, huffing, "Isn't it obvious? It's a prison, specifically built to contain me. Built by traitorous cretins..." He growled out, and Tommy looked around, "Seems to have been a long time since anyone's come here..."

"Well, you aren't wrong..." The man sounded...sad. Tommy looked at him again as he shook his head, snapping, "Next riddle. Now." The blonde teen nodded.

"I am something people love or hate. I change people's appearances and thoughts. If a person takes care of themself I will go up even higher. To some people, I will fool them. To others, I am a mystery. Some people might want to try and hide me but I will show. No matter how hard people try I will never go down. What am I?" Tommy bit his lip, looking to the floor. He dug deep, slowly beginning to pace until he took a chance.

"Is it age?"

The man looked surprised again, only this time more annoyed after, "Correct, again..." Tommy internally high-fived himself, smiling victoriously as he gave his next question, "Are...are you an angel?" He spoke hesitantly, feeling a bit childish. The man's eyes flew wide again and he howled with laughter, "An angel?! You are kidding me!?!!" He began to cackle, voice darkening and wings unfurling to loom over Tommy. He was like a predator, gigantic looking and threatened like he was ready to devour Tommy at any moment, "Child I am no silly fucking angel, I can assure you of that..." Tommy shrunk back, a bit fearful.

"N-next riddle!" He called. The man's lips curled in a sneer, and he approached Tommy, **"It can't be seen, can't be felt, can't be heard, and can't be smelt."** He walked around the teen slowly, eyes remaining on him with a low voice, **"It lies behind stars and under hills, And empty holes it fills. It comes first and follows after, ends life, and kills laughter."** Tommy yelped as his shoulders are grabbed from behind, and a voice hisses in his ear, **"What is it?"**

Heart thudding in his chest, Tommy didn't even have to think about this one. He knew it instantly because it was often his best friend.

"Its the dark."

His breath hitches as the man's grip on him tightens, "That...is correct." He speaks through gritted teeth before letting go, walking back around to Tommy's front. Tommy takes a deep breath.

"If you aren't an angel...what are you?"

*"Easy. I'm a hybrid, only my mother was a harpy and my father was a siren. I am judge, jury, and executioner to you pathetic sinful creatures- meant to help you all repent and earn forgiveness for your transgressions." The man spoke with venom, cackling, "I am a fucking **god** among you..."*

Tommy's stomach sank.

Two highly dangerous and lethal creatures and the offspring of them both is standing before him. Not only that, but one that apparently thinks obnoxiously high of himself for no reason. Like he has a god-complex of sorts. The man looks like he's about to brag even more, but his attention is drawn elsewhere.

"Looks like our game is over, for now that is. It's becoming sunrise..." Tommy jumped in alarm, "What?! How?!" He turned to the man, "No no no wait- I- I have so many questions still, fuck-!"

The man's smirk returned, "It's real easy...If you still have questions, then come find me."

"What?! How?!" He rolled his eyes, and with a wave of his hand, the compass from earlier appeared in his palm, "You see this? Someone gave you it, correct?"

"How did you-?!"

"This will point you to me. It'll be a long, dangerous journey though- so be sure this is what you want~"

"What?!"

"If you find and free me from these..." He shook the chains to show him, "Then I'll answer whatever questions you have. Riddle free, kid."

"Wait-!!"

The man shook his head, a single finger over his lips, "Until we meet again, Tommy Innit- if ever."

Suddenly, it felt like a weight was heavied onto his chest as he was pulled back from where he was.

He shot up in bed, gasping and sweating. His heart was thundering in his chest again, and he could hear his blood rushing in his ears, "Wha..." The sun hit his eyes through the window, and he winced as he looked out it from his bed.

'Alright mystery man...' He slipped out of bed, taking a deep breath to calm his racking nerves, 'I'll take up your little goose chase...'

"Although grasshoppers can hear, but they can't distinguish pitch very well."

Chapter Summary

Techno makes Bad an offer.

Tommy makes a decision.

And the boys finally have some form of adult supervision.

Chapter Notes

Tommy and Tubbo's designs are up on my tumblr!

<https://fantasticalbee.tumblr.com/post/630637813458780160/just-two-lads-during-sunrise-one-talking-about>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When they arrived back to the ship, the hues of a red and orange sunrise already were peaking over the shimmering dark blue ocean. Sapnap was drained, and considering Dream had given permission to take the day off he was quick to say goodnight and head off to his room. However, it was easy to tell that even with zero sleep and having swam for 4 hours straight- Bad was more energetic than ever. His entire body felt healthier and more comfortable- the sores on his feet had disappeared, the ache from the old wound in his shoulder nulled, and even the knots in his back had disappeared. Feeling light on his feet, he found himself spinning and dancing on the deck- suppressing happy little giggles as he twirled. Soon, he found himself watching the sunrise from the end of the ship- elbows resting on the railing as he let out a content sigh.

He couldn't even remember the last time he felt so safe and happy- well, that was a lie. He *could* remember, but it was too painful of a memory to dig up. Bad didn't particularly like dwelling on the past too much, but at the same time, he had a bad habit of remembering the most heartache inducing memories in vivid details.

He stirred from sleep, feeling eyes on him. Opening his eye a crack, he instantly remembered where he was. Hues of the golden sunrise cast over the flourishing meadow, the rays casting warmth on his body. His green eyes met blue, recognizing the 15-year-old beside him and regarding him with a lazy smile. Skeppy's tan face had a soft dusting of red as he stared, lips parted slightly and eyes dream-like as if Bad was the most stunning thing he'd ever seen. The siren yawned, reaching up to rubbing his eyes, "Geppy? How long..."

The other boy snapped out of it, blush creeping up his neck and turning his face redder as he blinked rapidly, "We uh... We fell asleep, heh. I woke up not long before you but I didn't really wanna disturb you..." He trailed off, his voice becoming harder to hear. Bad swore he heard something about him looking cute when sleeping, but brushed it off as he sat up.

He heard the ship floorboards creak behind him pull him from his thoughts, and he looked over his shoulder to see a certain pink-haired man walking over with a placid look. His silk vest and velvet cape were gone, his loose white blouse partially untucked and unbuttoned to expose his chest. His long hair was untied and messy- seeming to go a little bit past his shoulder blades- red eyes unfocused and posture relaxed. It was easy to tell he'd only just woken up.

"Kalimera!" He greeted the other in his native tongue, only realizing his slip up when Techno gave him a confused look. Feeling his face heat up, he quickly corrected himself, "I meant ah...Good morning..." A soft huff came in response, "Mornin..."

Techno walked over and Bad took in the sight of a large scar across his chest, just barely peeking out from his shirt. It was obviously quite old- the long healed flesh a dull pink contrast to his unnaturally pale skin. Hearing Techno clear his throat, Bad looked up at the man next to him. He took in the other's slight smirk, one brow raised as if curiously amused.

Bad's breath caught as blood rushed to his face. Had he been staring?

"You done?"

He had.

He looked away quickly, silently scolding himself and cursing his pale skin as he knew his cheeks were probably bright red. There was a chuckle and Techno hummed before speaking up, "It's our last day docked right?" Bad took a moment before replying, "Yea?"

The other man leaned forward on the rail beside Bad, their elbows touching as he turned his head to him, "Are you busy?"

He perked up curiously, "Not really...why?"

"You still don't know how to use that dagger properly, do you?" Great. His face was reddening with embarrassment again, "Ah...no..."

"Then how about I teach you?"

His head snapped to Techno, half-expecting him to be joking. But surprisingly there wasn't a hint of amusement in his expression, eyes more focused than earlier showing he was waking up more.

"You'd...do that?"

"Why not? You are involved with people who constantly are at risk of battle as part of their crew. Having to fight yourself is inevitable. Plus," He nodded this head towards the captain's quarters, "You don't like that they treat you like a helpless damsel, right?" The siren's heart stopped, surprise and confusion evident on his face. How did he...?

"Then why don't you prove them wrong?"

His blood ran cold, thoughts swirling in his head. Him. Fighting alongside them. Alongside Dream with his longsword and his movements strong and elegant, making split decisions and mindfully engrossed into making the right steps. Alongside George with his rapier, graceful and quick strikes with steady movements and easy balance- and Sapnap, with his broadsword making fierce and firm blows to throw his opponent off balance, and unwillingness to back down...

No. He couldn't imagine himself fighting by them, much less being good enough to actually *impress* them, "I can't."

"Why not?" Bad scoffed, eyes going downcast as he took a breath, "Do you have to ask? I can barely walk without stumbling, I'm hurt too easily, I'm not exactly the strongest..."

"And?" He glanced at Techno, and the other looked back at him expectantly, "That's it? You're making excuses?"

"What?" Bad looked at him in confusion and Techno tsked, shaking his head, "Bad, here's something I learned: It doesn't matter who you are, what you look like, or where you came from. If you have a pulse and a will to live, you can learn to fight." His words were firm, "If you have a motivation, even better. All you need is to want it and want it bad- putting hard practice and work into it. So," He stood up straight, eyes fixed on Bad with a hardened gaze, "Do you want to start learning, or not?"

Bad swore he could hear his heart thudding in his chest, mouth agape for a moment before swallowing and looking away, pondering his thoughts until he reached a decision, "I guess it's worth a shot..."

Techno smiled slightly, "Get into dry clothes and bring that dagger before meeting me back here. I know exactly the place to go."

The orphanage was quiet- most of the others out and working or playing. Tommy buttoned his red vest over his white dress shirt, not bothering to brush his hair as he turned to the window seat. Tubbo sat by it, curling in on himself and forehead pressed to the cool glass, warm breath fogging it up a bit. Tommy had made his mind up early that morning, quickly planning everything out in his head.

However, the most important question gnawed at the blonde's mind, making him fidget a slight bit. Could he convince Tubbo to come with him? Would the other even want to leave? What if Tubbo didn't want to go with him? Would it better to just go without telling him- no. Tommy could never do that, not to Tubbo. He walked over and sat beside the other boy, quiet.

Why was such a simple question so hard to voice?

"Did you know that although grasshoppers can hear, they can't distinguish pitch very well?" Tommy jumped at Tubbo's sudden voice, turning his head to meet his gaze. He gaped in surprise from the suddenness of the statement. However, a fascinated smile tugged at his lips as he processed the information, "Wait- really?"

"Mhm! They can detect differences in intensity and rhythm, but not pitch- also, their ears are on their bellies."

"Woah. Cool..."

"I know right?"

The boy sat in stunned silence for a moment, before suddenly remembering what he was thinking moments before. He shook his head, the thought clicking into place as he took a deep breath, "Hey Tubbo?"

"Hm?"

Tommy chose his words carefully, cautious as nervous built up, "If I were to...say, leave town on an adventure- and you knew I wouldn't like, be back for a long time- or, perhaps at all- what...would you do?" His voice pitched a bit at the end, refusing to look at the other and turning his head. "Isn't it obvious? I'd just come with you!" Tommy's head snapped towards Tubbo in alarm and surprise, eyes wide, "Seriously?"

"Of course I would!"

"But- what- what if we could die!" Tubbo laughed as the golden-haired boy flailed his arms dramatically, "Tommy- you're my best friend..." He smiled, his eyes sparkling with genuine affection and honesty, "Wherever you go, I'll follow. Okay? In this together, remember?" The boy blinked in surprise at his friend before snorting, rolling his eyes and looking away, "Oh my Amu, I can't fucking get rid of you can I?"

"Nope!" The younger chirped happily before going back to looking out the window. Putting a hand over his mouth to cover up his growing smile, Tommy scoffed playfully, "Clingy..." Tubbo snickered at that.

After a couple of minutes of silence, the older boy stood up, "I'll be back in a bit okay?"

"Mhm..."

Tommy walked to the door, his hand touching the cool metal of the handle as he pulled it open. He knew exactly where he was going. First, the cave to grab those items. Tommy had no idea what either was truly and he needed to know. He also had to track down a monster, and for that, he needed to know more about it. He smiled as he thought to himself.

If anybody knew anything about monsters and mysterious items, it would be the resident ex-monster hunter.

The hunter's mind was focused as he painted the lantern. There were only a few finishing touches, but they required the utmost focus and a steady hand. One stroke, two strokes...

Perfect.

He grinned, putting the brush into the cup of water beside him and standing. He tested out the small door to make sure it worked before latching it shut, standing up, and admiring his hard work. The walls behind him were lined with shelves of these lanterns, the shelves in the center of the shop having books on how to take care of certain creatures, trinkets and items scattered around.

Something in his heart twisted as he internally acknowledged just what this lantern was for. The kind of business he was in wasn't pretty, nor did he like it. But hey, everyone out here had to find some way to survive, and monsters were all he knew his entire life- so he worked with it.

He jumped as the door to his shop bust open, the bell jingling loudly as a voice called out to him.

"Schlatt!!!!"

The man behind the counter scrambled not to drop the lantern as he recovered from the scare. As Schlatt recognized Tommy's familiar voice, he internally groaned a bit. Sighing, he knew his minor headache was more likely going to get worse now, "Hey Tommy..." He put the lantern on the shelf

behind him as the boy made his way to the counter.

Sighing, he leaned forward on his elbows, "What is it today, hm?"

"I uh...I got these items that I was wondering if you could look over?" He put a giant bundle of red cloth on the counter, Schlatts eyes widening as he recognized the material, "Is this...velvet?!" How in the hell did this kid get ahold of velvet?!

"I think so- but that's not important-" He hastily opened the bundle, and Schlatts breath hitched as he saw the two small items. A golden compass pointing west sat by a beautiful glimmering blue jewel, and his mind raced as he focused his eyes on the jewel. He picked it up gently, admiring it in his palm.

"Alright, Tommy you better tell me what snotty lord you and your buddy murdered and robbed to get this." Schlatt laughed in disbelief as Tommy shook his head, the boys blue eyes glittering with excitement, "Well? What is it big man, tell me!" The ex-hunter was still in shock as he sputtered a bit, "Its- It's a heart of the sea...You can't really use this unless you know some form of magic- Kid, seriously where did you get this???"

"If I told you, you wouldn't believe me..." Schlatt rolled his eyes. Whatever, it wasn't like it mattered anyway. The ex-hunter was never one to snitch or care where anything really came from. He put down the jewel and picked up the compass, whistling at the weight of it, "This is made of real gold- but it...seems to be broken?" Tommy's mouth moved faster than his mind, "It's perfectly fine, it's just not really a normal compass-" The boy cut himself off abruptly and Schlatt paused, looking at Tommy with a brow raised, "Wanna tell me why you think that, Tommy?"

Contemplating his screw up, the blonde chewed his bottom lip. Could he trust Schlatt?

The ex-monster hunter was a legend for his skills, and Tommy basically idolized him- so he honestly badly wanted to brag at least a little about his upcoming adventure and talk about the dreams he had with the winged man, "Okay you gotta promise you won't think I'm crazy though." Schlatt rolled his eyes, "Kid have I ever been one to judge?"

Well...he wasn't wrong there. Tommy took a deep breath, a grin cracking across his face as he began to talk about the dreams and the incident on offering day. Schlatt's face remained expressionless as Tommy spoke, time ticking by.

"...and so, Me and Tubbo are gonna leave town tomorrow early morning and head off to follow the compass to find that winged guy and I can get my answers!" He wore a large, prideful grin as he puffed out his chest. To him, his plan sounded full-proof.

To Schlatt, this sounded like suicide.

"...Right..." He drawled, "Tommy, could you...describe what the man looked like?" Tommy tilted his head, "Uh...Fluffed up short curly hair, really tall- he had just these enormous wings...uh...he wore this really tattered silk dress shirt and tan torn pants...oh- he had chocolate brown eyes with golden flecks too-" A flicker of recognition crossed Schlatts face, body stiffening as he snapped, "Tommy, did he have a scar across his palms? Like he'd been grabbed the sharp edge of a sword and gripped it?"

Confusion painted the blonde's face, "What? Hell if I know..." He shrunk back a bit, "Why?" Schlatt deflated a bit, seeming to scowl, "It's...no reason. Forget it." As he shook his head, something clicked in Schlatt and slight worry crossed his face, "Wait- you two are going alone? By yourselves???"

"Yep!" Tommy was beaming again, "We're old enough to do so!"

"...you are...serious?"

"Mhm!"

Schlatt pinched the bridge of his nose in irritation. The two teens were not going to survive more than a week by themselves- Schlatt knew from experience that it was a lot harder than it sounded, and he knew deep down Tommy was only trying to sound brave and bold in his own effort to impress him.

Ever since the young boy made a connection between him and his aspired idol, he'd never ceased to pester the ex-hunter. Of course, how much Tommy looked up to him was endearing to him even if Schlatt didn't show it- but it was also a massive pain, as Tommy idolized him for all the wrong reasons.

Tommy more over idolized who he used to be, rather than him now. He idolized the legendary monster slayer he used to be, a part of Schlatt that he'd been trying to shake since he ended those days- trading endless adventure just to settle down and live a simpler life.

How unlucky did he have to be that he settled down in a place that not only had a high prejudice against monsters of all kinds, but also a home to what he referred to as his personal not-so-silent-shadow.

Honestly, he just cursed his weakness for cheap real estate.

In a gist, Schlatt had regretfully gotten a fair bit attached to the teen- it was hard not to when he was the likable kind of annoying- and the idea of him and his friend going on this kind of journey all by themselves struck all the wrong cords for him. So as he knew nobody else would do it, he silently signed his death warrant.

The ex-hunter chose his next words carefully. He didn't want it to make it sound like he thought they needed supervision, else Tommy might react negatively.

Schlatt let out an exaggerated sigh, standing up straight and snapping his fingers, "Well damn. And here I was thinking you guys might need a professional to come along with you!" Putting the compass next to the jewel and bundling up the items in the velvet cape again, he grinned at the wide-eyed look on Tommy's face. He walked around the counter, shoving the bundle in Tommy's arms and putting a hand on his back as he led him out, "Seems like you two got it all covered though, so of course you wouldn't want an old man like me tagging along-"

Tommy's heart leaped, scrambling to a stop as he cut Schlatt off, "Wait wait wait-!!" The ex-hunter raised a brow and Tommy spoke quickly, "If you wanted to come along we uh- we wouldn't mind extra company-" He coughed, gulping and trying to give a confident smirk that almost made Schlatt break into laughter, "Though we could totally handle ourselves- uh...we really wouldn't mind heh..."

Schlatt rolled his eyes as the normally boisterous teen's voice drifted to a shy mutter. He reached up, ruffling Tommy's hair with a chuckle, "Guess it's settled then! Swing by the shop when ready, kid. I have a cart we can use. It'll be easier than walking."

A bright smile tugged at Tommy's lips, giving a nod before rushing out of the shop.

As silence took over the small shop again, Schlatt's mind drifted back to what Tommy had said earlier. He took a deep breath, trying to focus. There wasn't any possible way the man in Tommy's

dream was...

He felt his mind cloud just at the mere thought of him, walking back to the counter to lean back against it. His headache throbbed, vision hazy. It couldn't be the same hybrid- there had to be more than one harpy-siren hybrid, right? They were rare, but not once-in-a-lifetime...

He put his hand over his mouth, shutting his eyes.

"Just one bite...~"

He heard himself purr, voice an echo. Power tingled in the palms of his very hands, his body doing the very will of his puppet master. His arms wrapped around the lithe man's waist, one of his hands slipping the stunning golden apple into the other's palm. His voice smooth as silk urging the young man forward...one bite and chaos would break free.

All of them knew that, the other two men calling out for their friend to stop.

"Slime no!!" The man whimpered, hands trembling as they cupped the apple in them, "I-i can't- It looks so good I-"

Schlatt heard the cackling laughter of the Harpy, eyes flickering to his gorgeous form to find him watching the 4 mortals in amusement. He caught Schlatt's eyes and his smile twisted into a cruel smirk, eyes urging him forward eagerly. Heart already crazed and sick, Schlatt turned his attention to the others.

They were his friends, but now with newfound power, they were nothing to him. The only one he needed was watching him.

"Eat." This time, it was a command as his arms wound tighter around the man, and Slime's resolve broke within moments. He brought the golden apple to his lips and bit into it, pupils flashing gold and juices seeping from his lips. He froze, eyes wide as a neon pink substance flowed out of his mouth and he began to cough it up like it was poison. One of the men cried out, "Slime!!!" Schlatt cackled, letting go and shoving Slime forward- leaving the man spasming on the ground and trying to hack up the apple piece desperately. The wind began to blow harder, a storm brewing overhead as the ground shook.

It had begun.

His eyes met the false god's, body trembling with his own sadistic excitement as he heard the harpy's psychotic joyous laughter over the rolling thunder. So entranced by the sight, he never even noticed one of the men running at him with an axe, the blade coming down on his back as there was a shot of white-hot pain wrecking his entire body.

Then, darkness.

Opening his eyes quickly, he breathed shakily. He felt the phantom tingles of the old power in his system but knew they were just a lingering feeling. He never wanted power like that again- never, ever...

He felt sick.

What if that hybrid was *him*?

If the harpy Tommy was searching for was Wilbur, then Schlatt truly was signing his death warrant with this. With a soft moan of despair, he buried his face in his hands, "Xisuma help me..." He murmured to himself, the silence leaving him to his paranoid thoughts.

Chapter End Notes

There was a lot of people that I could have had babysitting the boys but Schlatt was the only good option, trust me. I have plans for any of the others who I could have had, and Schlatt really felt like the right choice.

Also everyone expecting Schlatt to be terrorizing Wilbur and not the other way around b/c of the SMP atm but I'm just sitting here like nah :)

Hope you enjoyed!! <3

Deep Cuts to the Heart

Chapter Notes

No warnings for this one! Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"We're leaving? So soon?"

"We have to."

George watched as Dream paced about the quarters, slightly annoyed. It wasn't like him to seem so on edge and it truly put the prince on edge as well, "And...are you going to tell me why, or are you going to keep pacing like an impatient cat?" Dream shook his head and something flared inside George.

Another secret? Was he serious?

What had happened to being partners? To trusting one another?

"No. No you are not doing this. Not this time!" He snapped, his vocal rise catching Dream's attention, "You always are doing this!! Do you even know how useless I feel around here?!"

"What...?" Dream was genuinely baffled. George never had problems with how he was before- so why now? And what did he mean useless...?

"George-"

"You've kept secret after secret from me, and a few I can understand but now this is getting too much!" Dream's heart twisted at that, gaping a bit. Was that really all he had been doing? George pushed up his glasses, wiping his eyes, "You tell Sapnap everything, Dream. I understand you are a more secretive person. I understand there are things you don't like talking about. But this is something I need to know too..."

The fairy was silent for a few moments before walking over, taking George into his arms- tightly hugging him, "I...I'm sorry. I guess I didn't realize I was brushing you off so much..."

George hugged back, sniffing, "It's fine just...will you *please* tell me what's going on this time?" He begged and Dream sighed. The fairy pulled back, going back to pacing, "I got word back from an informant- a friend of mine..." He chewed his bottom lip nervously, "George, someone is trailing us. Specifically, it's a navy captain following us- and I think he's after Bad. He's a port behind us, so that's good- but I'm trying to keep that distance to avoid conflict. We aren't a big enough crew to handle that kind of fight, George. That's why we're leaving a day earlier: to get ahead of him and keep a safe distance." George's stomach dropped, "Does...does Bad know?"

"No- I don't think it's a good idea else he might try running to 'keep us safe'..." The prince's brows knitted together, "What? Dream, if this guy is after Bad he deserves to know!" Dream shook his head, "No- I'm not even sure it's the person after Bad so we really shouldn't just- just please trust me on this, I know what I'm doing..." His headache spiked and Dream groaned in slight pain. George looked at his boyfriend with concern, "It really doesn't seem like you do, Dream..." He

walked over, putting a hand on Dreams back comfortingly, "but...I trust you. You haven't proven me wrong yet..." Leaning up, he pressed a soft kiss to Dreams lips- the captain leaning into it with a content, happy exhale as he relaxed.

How did he get so lucky?

"Get back here!!" Dream sprinted through the gardens, the guards hot on his heels as he tried to make an escape. He ducked behind a hedge, the guards running past him.

As their voices grew fainter, he looked up to see the Prince's balcony. He grabbed a few small pebbles from the ground and chucked them at the glass door, the rocks making quiet tinkling noises. Amu, this was such a fairytale scene...

The glass door flung open and George walked out angrily, ready to shout at whoever was throwing rocks at his door until he spotted Dream.

"Dream?!" He whisper yelled and the pirate waved his arms desperately, practically pleading for help. George looked around quickly before spotting a coil of rope he usually used for sneaking out. He grabbed the rope and tossed one end to Dream, tying the other end to the marble banister.

As quick as possible he climbed up the rope before hoisting himself up onto the balcony. Quickly he helped George untie and pull up the rope.

The prince grabbed his wrist, pulling him in his room as he snapped, "What are you doing here?! You could have gotten captured, you absolute idiot!!" Dream rolled his eyes, "Yea, well, I didn't."

"You-!!" George ran his hand through his hair, pulling it a bit in frustration. Dream crossed his arms, "I told you. If you missed meeting me at the docks, I'd come to visit you at the palace." He gestured around with a smug smile, "And you did. And since I'm not missing out a single day of the three that I get every two or so months to hang out with my favorite princely brat, I'm here." He pushed his mask to his nose, taking George's hand and bowing. He pressed a kiss to his knuckles before standing up and pulling the brunette in, his other arm looping around his waist as he leaned in, "Tell me, Crowned Prince George Non Inventi..." The blonde purred almost mockingly, "Have I proved myself to be a worthy suitor yet? Or perhaps your king~?"

George's heartbeat skipped, face a bright red. He turned his face in defiance before pushing Dream off him. The fairy let out a disappointed noise and pouted as George rolled his eyes at him, guaffing, "Not a chance in the damn world, Captain Dream."

Oh, how hilarious those past words seemed to Dream now simply from the irony.

Maybe he was just lucky- and for Dream, that was enough.

As he stared out the window, Tubbo was content. He stared deep into the distance, into the treeline past the color-changing leaves. His focus was pulled to a specific area as he saw the flutter of a

white veil in the treeline, but as he blinked it disappeared. Shaking it off, he figured he was just seeing things- probably the result something weird in his breakfast.

Until he saw it again, and this time a woman stepped out from behind the treeline. She was young- maybe in her 20's- and incredibly beautiful, with long strawberry blonde hair and a fluttering white gown. There was a shiver up his spine as she stared right back into his eyes, a soft smile gracing her lovely features.

Tubbo couldn't help smiling back, and suddenly it clicked.

That woman- the one who had pulled him to safety...

That was her.

He scrambled up from the sill and out the bedroom door, not even bothering to put on his shoes as he dashed out of the orphanage. He stopped as he reached the porch steps, eyes searching the treeline once more.

As his eyes found her again, his stomach dropping as he released she was turned away as to walk into the forest.

"Wait!!" He called, breaking into a sprint across the lawn, "Wait, Miss!!"

He slid down the grassy hill, the cold biting his exposed skin. She looked at him over her shoulder with a playful smile, bringing a finger to her lips and making a shushing gesture before walking into the forest. She disappeared behind a tree, and Tubbo skidded to a stop as he reached the treeline. His eyes frantically searched, and suddenly he saw her again- much farther from him than she'd been moments ago. She beckoned him to follow her, her smile wide.

Tubbo hesitated.

"Remember, the forest is dangerous! Anything could happen, and that's why you never go through it!!" His fingers intertwined with Tommy's fearfully as they listened to Mrs. Aldear, "No matter what, we never go into the forest without each other- right Tubbo?" Tommy's voice was a whisper. They both adored the forest- it was their escape- and they didn't want to give it up. So instead they employed their own safety measure- their buddy system.

"Right!"

He wasn't supposed to go alone, but he felt like if he waited for Tommy he'd miss some important chance...

'I won't go too far in...' He told himself. It wasn't a betrayal of trust if he didn't go in too far, right? He'd be in and out before Tommy would ever know.

Tubbo took one step, and suddenly he felt...strange.

It was like something was waking up inside him for the first time- like he could hear everything in the forest calling to him to search for something it hid from his eyes. His previous thoughts ignored, he sped into the forest, seeing the woman disappear behind trees again and reappear further as he gave chase.

The dead leaves crunched under his bare feet, adrenaline pumping in his system as his eyes focused on searching. Searching for that near-glowing white dress and strawberry blonde hair among the dark oaks and shrubbery in the forest. He called for her to wait, to please just stop- but she kept going, leading him deeper and deeper into the forest. Tubbo jumped over roots and logs, ducking and dodging between the trees, panting.

Suddenly, as he hopped over another log the grass under him gave way. He fell forward, hands scrambling for purchase. He snagged a tree root and clung on for dear life, panicking. His head was too clouded with adrenaline to think straight, every inch of him trembling as he cursed himself for not watching where he was stepping. Tubbo tried to reach for the edge of the hole, but found it to be no use when he couldn't get a firm grasp on the slippery, cold grass.

'Dammit', he thought to himself. What was with him and falling into perilous situations lately?

"Help!!"

He called out. Looking under him, he felt sick as he realized in whatever cavern-like area he had opened up, it was too dark to even see the bottom.

Feeling eyes on him, he looked up to see the woman standing above him. She was silent and unmoving as her eyes met his. Trying his luck, he called out, "Miss! Please help me!"

She stood still for a few seconds- enough time to hear the root starting to snap- before kneeling and reaching for him. Thankful, he let go with one hand and reached for hers desperately. Unable to reach, Tubbo attempted to pull himself up more, whimpering in fear as the root started snapping more, and he tried not to think about the demise that would meet him in the darkness.

Still unable to reach, he took a deep breath before he attempted to swing himself up. One swing-miss.

Two. Miss.

Three...

The root snapped just as his hand aligned with the woman's, hope filling him.

But as he went to grasp it, his hand passed right through hers. The world around him moved in slow motion as his eyes widened and heart plummeted.

What?

What had just happened?

His life flashed before his eyes as he plummeted into the darkness, the woman's eyes filling with sadness as she watched him fall- but her expression unsurprised.

The light slowly grew to be a small spot of light in the dark cave, and as he hit the ground the air was knocked from his lungs, instantly succumbing to unconsciousness as it crept at the edges of his vision.

Techno smiled as they came across the forest clearing, the old beaten up straw dummies in the center of the clearing, "Alright, we're here." He set the sack on the ground, opening it to search for something. Bad looked at the area with wonder, "How did you know this was here...?"

"Simple. I've been here before- a long, long time ago." He mused. Finding the crimson ribbon, he took it out and pulled his hair and bangs back into a high ponytail in a swift, easy motion. He grabbed another ribbon- this one pure white- and beckoned the siren over. Bad walked over curious, "Turn, back to me." He drew a circle in the air and Bad tilted his head curiously before turning around. He let out a surprised noise as the larger man gently started to pull his hair and bangs back, "First things first. Long hair is a good, dramatic look! I know." He combed his fingers through the soft, ever so slightly damp hair of the siren, gently working through the loose knots as he spoke, "But it gets in the way of your eyesight- and that's something critical. You need to see your opponent at every angle possible." Techno began to braid it as Bad sighed contently. How long had it been since he'd had someone else take care of his hair again? He always forgot to on land, as it wasn't something he worried about very often in the water.

"If you can't, you risk receiving a strike from an angle you were unaware of existing in that moment. Got it?"

Techno finished by tying the end with the silk white ribbon, admiring his work. Bad nodded, turning to him with an appreciative smile.

Techno's heart warmed a bit. Bad's bangs always covered the left side of his face, so he hadn't seen it before. The left eye was a slightly paler green than his right one, a long healed faint scar running from his brow to mid-cheek- but other than those differences, it was just the same as the right. He had dimples, a faint spray of freckles across his pale skin and cheeks a soft, rosy red. It was a cute look, one that reminded him of childish innocence. A single unwanted thought suddenly invaded his mind.

He almost looks like Chelem.

The moment was short-lived as he tore his eyes away in a panic from the thought. No, no he didn't look like Dream. Dream didn't look so innocent, even back then.

"Techno?"

He turned his red eyes to Bad, who looked at him with concern. He took a breath. What had spurred on that thought? The only similarity they had were their eyes- nothing more. Dream's hair was an almost dirty blonde and short, Bad's was black as midnight and long. Dream had peach skin, Bad was fair.

Techno sighed, shaking his head. Maybe it was just the situation- him offering to train someone out of him having a random moment of kindness not even he understood, "Sorry, was just thinking about something random. Do you have the dagger?"

Bad perked up, nodding and pulling it out. The green crystal shone in the sunlight.

"Good, we'll start with that and move onto a crossbow later."

Bad nodded.

"Now..." Techno drew his sword, getting in a guard stance, "Attacks for a dagger are basically the same as sword attacks. You are aiming to deliver a pulled blow to a legitimate target area- however, there is one exception, and that is that thrusting is allowed. Now, when you thrust it is

imperative you mustn't lock your wrist- is that clear?"

"Mhm!"

Techno stabbed the blade into the ground and drew his own dagger from his belt, twirling it in his fingers as he stood up straight again, "Speed is your key focus. You want to get your weapon in and out as quickly as possible and then get back out of distance. A big thing in using a dagger is that fighting lies in feinting to confuse the opponent-" Bad gave him a strange look and Techno elaborated, "A feint is a partially delivered attack- stopped short and withdrawn, or another sudden movement threatens a grapple. A grapple involves catching the opponent's hand or wrist with your hand. This not only prevents your opponent from attacking properly and allows you to move their arm so you can have a good position to strike them." The siren made an 'O' shape with his mouth, nodding in interest. Techno hummed, gripping the daggers handle, "Now, traditionally you really shouldn't train with someone significantly taller or shorter than you- but we don't really have a choice here so..." He shrugged before gesturing, "Alright, let's try the basics. Guard position first: for high guard, put your dagger forward and high, left hand back and stand at middle height."

Slightly confused, Bad listened to the instructions. One by one, they tried out different moves from high guard- then from shielded guard and wide guard. The siren slowly got a hang of it, beaming a bit in pride.

"Okay, one last, quick lesson. Attack my left side." Bad nodded, getting into high guard again. He was quick, attempting to feint Techno like he was cutting across his leg before trying to cut into his left side. To his surprise, Techno quickly trapped his knife arm between his left arm and side. Bad squirmed, but the maneuver made it near impossible to move his wrist. Techno quickly pulled him in, twisting him around and pulling his arm behind his back. The cold bite of the blade touched his neck and his breath hitched. The two breathed heavily, taking a second to relax their pounding hearts.

"Your opponent can easily turn the tides just like that, so be careful and mindful of your strikes." He let go and Bad stumbled forward, rolling his shoulder and groaning in pain. Techno slipped the dagger back in its holder before walking over to the crossbow, "Okay, now let's put a bit of work into this..."

Chapter End Notes

Me, from under piles of research into knife fighting: *thumbs up*

Hope y'all enjoyed!

Arborvite, Crimson Rose, Daisy's, & Anemone's

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry for how long this chapter has taken, but to make for it this ones a long one!

I would like to give credit to my new fantastic beta-reader too!

His tumblr is architech3702 and his ao3 is IanLovesFanfiction!!!!

With that said, enjoy! <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As he trudged up the hill, Tommy watched the sun slowly descend in the sky. He held the tied bundle of fabric in his arms, his and Tubbo's box of shillings inside along with that heart of the sea. He was excited to tell his friend the good news and was sure nothing could dampen his mood- how could it? They were finally leaving this dump- and with his idol too! Silently, Tommy wondered how excited Tubbo would be before pondering to himself. What had Tubbo done all day? He hadn't seen him in town at all and he knew Tubbo wasn't one to sit still all day and just look out the window.

So as he entered one of the many small bedrooms of the orphanage- the one he and Tubbo had shared with at least 6 others- he wasn't surprised to find Tubbo gone from the windowsill. He figured maybe he was still in town, and so eagerly he began to pack their few possessions into a sack- a few pairs of worn-out clothes, some keep-sakes, and finally the bundled cloth of items. Looking around cautiously, he tapped the floorboards until one had a hollow sound. Quickly and painfully he pried it open, revealing a little secret area between the ground and the floor.

Another item sat there wrapped in an old cloth and tied around with a thin piece of rope; one of Tubbo's keepsakes. The younger boy had always said that it was the only thing he'd had with him when he was left at the orphanage- but had no memory as to who's it was.

He untied the string holding the cloth together, revealing an old leather-bound book, opening up the worn cover to look through the old, yellowing pages.

As soon as he opened it's pages, a welcoming scent of pumpkin pie and cinnamon hit him, his stomach growling loudly from it. He looked nervously to the door again, wary of someone walking in while he had the book out. He strained to listen and when he heard nothing, he turned back to the book.

The entire book was written in a language Tommy didn't understand, but from the moment Tubbo

had shown it to him Tommy was entirely entranced by the beautifully clean cursive writing and lovingly drawn illustrations by them. The front of the book was ancient, worn down leather- but the drawing on the front was like brand new. The symbol of a half sun and half moon clear as day.

His eyes met the only English in the entire book, an odd warmth feeling filling him despite having read it a thousand times over.

"For my little Koray, and his future Helio- whoever that may be."

Under the sentence was another illustration, this time one of two hands with a moon and sun tattoo on their wrists. Between the pages were two necklaces with sun and moon pendants, their jewels glittering in the soft glow of the room.

It was easy to tell how much love was put into the book, and it brought Tommy happiness to know that Tubbo had some semblance left of whoever had put him here.

The two of them only assumed that Tubbo's birth name was Koray from the book, but as neither were sure, they had just continued using Tubbo.

Shutting the book, Tommy carefully packed it in the sack- paranoid about damaging it. As he glanced up, suddenly the warmth in his chest disappeared and his heart dropped. Spotting Tubbo's shoes still on the floor, anxiety-filled him and his eyes went wide. Where had Tubbo gone without his shoes? Looking out the window he realized another thing; it was getting dark, the last rays of sunset peeking from over the forest, and Tubbo was still gone.

Panic set in and instantly Tommy took off through the orphanage, calling for his friend. His mind tried to give thousands of excuses.

Maybe he just forgot to put them on.

Maybe he's with one of the misses.

Maybe he's just in town buying new shoes!

That! That had to be it- their shoes were both pretty worn out and old, so he could have just gone into town without them.

He just needed to check.

Tommy slipped his own shoes back on and tucked their bag under the bed before taking off. His heart was racing, the cold air hitting his skin as he ran back down the path to town. He sprinted through town, not caring for the annoyed and angered noises from people he bumped and shoved

past.

When he finally reached the cobblers, he was devastated to find it closed. Instantly more panic filled him and he started frantically asking strangers if they'd seen him. He gave them his name and described what he looked like, but everyone simply brushed him off or sympathetically told him they hadn't. The ground under him felt like it was about to collapse- this couldn't be happening...

"Hey- hey kid- hold on-" Someone grasped his shoulder and he whipped around defensively. A man a bit shorter than him- but clearly quite a bit older- took him by the shoulders with a semi-loose grip. His short hair was black as a ravens feather and skin was a light tan, scruffy facial hair decorating his chin, upper lip, and jawline. His eyes were a crystal blue akin to Tommy's and full of an almost parental concern as he looked a bit up at the teen, "Calm down, okay? Take a breath and tell me what's going on..."

Not thinking, Tommy followed the stranger's instructions- a repetition of deep breaths in and out slowly settling his rapid heartbeat and slight shaking. The world under his feet stopped spinning and he spoke, voice wavering, "M-my friend- I can't find my friend Tubbo. Last I saw him was this morning in the orphanage and-" He whimpered, "Please, please tell me you've seen him..."

The man looked at him sympathetically, squeezing his shoulders comfortingly, "Well that depends, what does he look like?"

"U-uh...really pale blonde pulled back in a ponytail, really clear ice blue eyes, freckles...he usually wears this green old dress shirt and brownish torn shorts?" Tommy started to settle down a bit and the man seemed to think, "Im...not sure." He tapped his chin, "Is there any chance your friend might have gone into the forest?" The man knew this town had a record for children disappearing in the forest, and usually the blame was put on this being a slight hotspot for monsters.

The teen almost laughed humorlessly at that. Tubbo? Going into the forest without him? No- they made a promise to never do that.

"Nope. No way, not Tubbo-" The man gave a knowing look, brows raised skeptically, "But is there a possibility? A sliver of a chance?"

"I-" Tommy paused, suddenly not so confident, "Well...I guess?"

The man smiled at him, "Tell you what kid- I'll make you a deal. I know the land better than anyone and I know that forest too. If you go back to the orphanage or wherever you need to be and calm yourself- I will go into the forest and try to see if I can locate your friend. Sound good?"

Tommy didn't feel good at all, but what choice did he have? If there was a chance Tubbo was in those woods, and this man was offering to look for him...

"I-i...alright..." The man smiled, patting him on the back gently with eyes full of genuine sympathy, "Don't worry...If it's up to me, I'll do everything I can to bring him back to you safe and sound. Okay?"

Tommy didn't answer, not completely trusting of the stranger. The man understood his cautiousness though, but deep down he knew exactly how Tommy felt at that moment. Holding his hand out, Tommy was hesitant, "I'm...Tommy by the way..." The man smiled kindly, taking his hand in a firm grip as he shook it. He knew after this he was probably going to let Schlatt know what was happening, and Tommy watched as the man used two fingers to push his unusual red-rimmed glasses further up his face, "Maverick Aspen, adventurer, explorer, and cartographer"

=x=

Groaning, Tubbo awoke with a pounding headache. His mouth felt like it had been filled with cotton, his ears still ringing a bit. His entire body was in pure agony, bones screaming in protest as he tried to move and his skull feeling as if he had smashed it against the wall a hundred times.

He forced himself to sit up, eyes cracking open as he trembled a bit from the pain. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, the ringing began to fade and he listened to the quiet sound of droplets hitting puddles of water. Recalling the events before he passed out, Tubbo whimpered.

Looking up to the hole he fell through, he noticed it was dimmer outside- how was it almost night? He stood up shaking, looking around. There were no other exits, the cave quite large and extremely dark. A chilling breeze pricked at his skin and he jumped, looking in the direction it had come.

On the wall was a torn banner, weathered from age and seeming burned at the edges. It blew from a slight wind and quickly Tubbo realized there must have been something behind it. Cautiously, he approached the wall and reached out- grabbing the end of the banner.

'This is a terrible idea...' He thought to himself, before roughly yanking it down. The banner ripped easily off the wall, and quickly Tubbo jumped out of the way as it fell.

There was a long tunnel leading to another room, and suddenly a terrible stench hit his nose. He cringed, pulling his shirt over his nose and mouth.

"W-what the fuck?" He muttered to himself, looking down the tunnel. The other room seemed to

be illuminated in fading daylight, its walls creeping with vegetation.

Ignoring the stench, Tubbo forced himself to walk through the tunnel- eyes watering as the smell only got worse. When he emerged on the other side, he looked up to find himself in a deep pit- the walls steep and the drop from the top looking deadly. Suddenly, the stench was replaced with a flowery scent like lilies and Tubbo jumped as he felt a freezing breath hit his neck, looking around wildly. He looked to the floor and his eyes flew open in surprise. The woman from before laid asleep on the floor, her back to him.

"Miss?"

He called curiously, approaching her. The white dress was laid around her, pure white and practically glowing as her hair was spread out around her head like a halo. Crouching down, he put a hand on his shoulder and gently shook her in an attempt to stir her from her sleep, "Miss? Miss are you-"

Tubbo turned to look at her face.

He jumped back and let out a horrified scream that he barely recognized as his own, the illusion disappearing as the terrible smell hit him again. Her cold eyes stared at him lifelessly, face beaten and bruised, having dried blood and dirt smeared on it. The woman's hair was a frazzled, dirty mess- her skin pale as death and drained of any color while her white dress was torn and dirty-stained and splattered with even more blood while one of her legs was bent in an odd angle.

He scrambled until he was pressed against the opposite wall, the smell hitting him full force and making his stomach roll in disgust, feeling nausea and sickness overwhelm him.

A corpse.

He was staring at a fucking corpse.

Tubbo was going to puke. He didn't want to look at her, but god it was like he just couldn't tear his eyes away. She must have been dead for a while- maybe a few weeks- as the decomposition had only seemed to have barely started. His eyes caught a little brown book in her hand, and instantly the fear was mixed with curiosity.

Did that book say who she was?

Tubbo's eyes fixed on it, something tugging him forward.

Slowly, he crept closer- heart beating rapidly in his chest as blood rushed in his ears. He slowly reached for it as endless scenarios flashed in his mind- what if she wasn't dead? What if the moment he grabbed it she came to life and attacked him?

Before he knew it he had snatched the book and scrambled back again, retreating to the other side of the room. He stared for a few minutes, taking a few breaths as he waited for her to move. When she didn't, he cautiously looked to the book and flipped to open.

The air wafted from the book smelling like fresh lilies before dissipating in the air. Its crisp pages were faded and dirty brown, battered and torn with the ink smudged and faded from water damage.

On the first page it stated whose property it was- only in place of the name, there were ink splotches. He flipped through it, the writing neat and feminine in style- but every time the name came up it was scratched out in black ink.

By the time Tubbo had flipped throughout the entire book, he still had none of his questions answered and had no identity of the woman. He looked at her, heart aching a bit in sympathy. Did she have a family? Was there someone still waiting for her? How did she get like this...

Deep down, he felt this book held the answers- he just needed to actually read it first...

Until then, he needed a name for her.

"I'll call you Niki- just till I know who you really are..."

For a moment, he thought he heard a soft voice thank him- however quickly his attention was torn away by the snapping of a branch. He looked up, seeing the last rays of sunlight disappear as fear came over him.

First things first though. He needed to get out of this pit.

=x=

After a rough day of training, it wasn't a surprise when Bad was falling asleep the moment he sat

down. He was a natural archer, showing a lot of potential with the crossbow- but at that Techno still wasn't surprised. Bad had sharp eyes and that much was obvious, and with the way he had held the crossbow it was almost like it was meant for him. A match made in the Aether, Techno thought humorously.

Standing over him, Techno slung the heavy sack over his shoulder and stared down at the smaller man laying against the shaded tree base. He crouched down, the sleeping siren so incredibly still and peaceful. Techno almost felt guilty having to wake him, but they couldn't stay here when it was getting so late. He put down the sack and began to reach forward to gently shake him awake, but was promptly stopped by another hand touching his wrist delicately.

"Shhh...we shouldn't wake him just yet..."

The familiar, soothing voice was a blessing to Techno's ears, sighing in relief as he turned his head. Forest green eyes gazed down at Bad with a soft smile, "He needs his rest..." Reaching forward, a gentle hand steadily and softly stroking his head. He chuckled quietly, still whispering, "Honestly, you could mistake him for a corpse like this...but alas it isn't his time- not for a long while." He stood up and Techno took a glance at Bad before following the man. His walk was graceful and his steps didn't break their rhythm, one of his skeletal wings outstretching to gently usher him closer, "Come on son, we need to talk."

Techno followed the man as they walked into the forest, rounding a tree only to appear somewhere else entirely. It was a warm beach, the sun bearing down brightly. The war god grew anxious, "Phil, what is this about?"

"Do I really need a reason to come see you?"

"Yes, most of the time." Techno deadpanned, and Phil looked slightly stung by the remark. He sighed, "Your right, I do need to make a point to see you more often...I'm sorry..." The taller felt a pang of guilt, a hand going to the other man's shoulder, "No- I'm sorry Phil. That was rude of me, I know your work keeps you busy more than I know..."

Phil smiled wearily, "Eh, it's just being on a court deciding the fates of people coming into the afterlife. No big deal." He joked. Techno snickered as the blonde continued, "It's Amusix."

Techno felt the anxiety worsen in a heartbeat, internally pleading that this wasn't about what he thought it was, "It appears someone has stolen one of his precious jewels and he's quite livid about it. Heart of the sea, I believe?" Techno winced, about to speak up when Phil continued, "Oh, and Xisuma's compass of voluntas quidem cordis is missing too." He gave Techno a tight-lipped smile as the war god's stomach plummeted, "You wouldn't happen to know where they would be, would you now?"

Techno didn't have any words. He could have sworn those items were just magic trinkets, the two main gods never cared for them before- so why now? It's not like they were ever used- they were always just sitting in the vaults gathering dust.

Techno only had one word.

"Fuck."

Phil snorted skeptically, "That's all you have to say for yourself?!" He swatted at the back of Techno's head, the war-god wincing, "Techno what were you thinking?! Taking them was dumb enough, but you gave them to mortal children! Do you know what they're going to do when they find out you took them?" Techno paled further, turning to Phil, "Do they know about me taking them? About the kids?!"

Phil sighed, shaking his head, "No. As for the two orphans you entrusted with the items- they are apparently going to start following the compass. X and Amu don't know about them... *yet* ." The way he pronounced the last word was like a warning, but Techno was too relieved to care.

"Techno when will you learn that you can't be so reckless with your godhood? Especially when it comes to just- just taking things from other gods! Especially from the originals-" Techno's heart seized in pain, frowning deeply at Phil's well-meaning words, "Techno, I know you are the youngest of the gods. But you need to understand, Keralis gifted you this godhood because he saw you worthy of it-"

Techno's eye's widened, temper flaring in pure rage at the mention of Keralis. The fucking deceitful prick, lying about these reasons...Techno turned sharply to face Phil.

"Gift?!! This isn't a fucking gift, Phil its a curse!! A curse that hid itself as a blessing so I'd never understand it was one until it was too damn late!!" He growled out, startling Phil. The judge stepped back warily, knowing full well not to incite further anger from the war god. Making his point, his bones began to crack and shift. His human form gave way for his true god-form. It was monstrous, larger, taller, and threatening- like something that had just walked out the gates of Hell. He towered over Phil, snarling as he spoke with a rumbling, booming voice, "Does this look like someone who has been blessed?! Tell me, Phil, what part of becoming a god has done anything good for me other than immortality?! I'm a beast, not a human or a god! People do nothing but fear me the moment they see this part of me-" Techno faltered as the small flash of nervousness appeared in Phil's forest green eyes, anger deflating a slight bit as he turned back to the ocean, slowly sitting back on his haunches, "See? Even you..."

Looking into the clear waves, he saw his own reflection and remorse filled him. The glowing red eyes stared back at him, his head now one of a vicious looking boar- tusks sharpened to points and lips in a permanent sneer. The golden crown-like halo of thorns sat on his head and a lustrous king-like robe of vibrant red waves lined with the softest cotton sat on his broad shoulders, heavy armor covering every inch of his skin leaving only the smallest gaps and two large deep grey bat's wings folded behind him. His face and wings were laden with scars only slightly off the normal color of his skin.

He was the physical manifestation of a prideful, rage-filled, blood-thirsty boar in anthropomorphic form- and honestly, he deserved it.

"Phil, all godhood has done for me is make me feel more alone than I did as a mortal. People build statues of *this* version of me and quake in fear at the sight of it. Mortals hate me and the other gods don't even acknowledge my existence until they need someone to blame for the mortals going to war...I feed off of negative emotions and violence so I'm forced to hurt people. This existence has been a curse for more than 500 years, and it just keeps getting worse no matter what I try. So I might as well try my luck until my luck wears out, maybe even try to help some mortals on the way..." Techno's eyes stung with tears as he stared, heart aching a bit, "And even when I help, I help someone too much and I let myself get too close and comfortable...then I do something stupid that messes everything up without meaning to, so they leave." He chuckled, the sound hollow and empty, "It's been more than 50 years y'know, and he still hates me because I just fucked up that bad- but there's too much pride in me to simply just- just fucking apologize for something so small..."

As his voice trailed off, there was no response from the fatherly man and silence settled between them. There was a soft breath and Phil looked sympathetically at the war god, reaching and setting his hand on Techno's back, "Calvin and Nes miss you, you know."

"Phil..."

"I'm telling the truth here- they really miss you, Techno. They aren't angry with you in the slightest..."

The god remained silent, not looking to the judge. Phil sighed, "Techno, I want you to give yourself one last chance."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because you want to, deep down."

Phil's tone is firm, and it's clear his word is final on this, "Give yourself one more chance at trying, okay? I have a gut feeling that this time things will be better..." Techno slowly stood, side-glancing to the other man before slowly shifting back to his human form. His long pink locks were pulled into a bun again, eyes now a more normal soft red and skin becoming pale as the moon, "Where...where would I even start...?" His voice was softer, now deep and more pleasant to the ears but distant and lost in tone. Phil smiled at this and waved him to follow, leading him back through the trees.

They appeared once more in the clearing, where it seemed nothing had changed at all, "Well, that's not really a question when you already have started~" Techno gave a confused look and Phil

hummed, gesturing to the siren sleeping below the tree. He was still as content as earlier, not bothered by the slight chill in the air or the roughness of the ground beneath him, "You've already started with the little gem, so you should just try to continue. You've been nothing but yourself around him, and he seems to not mind: so keep being yourself. Those two orphans also seem like a good place to start helping too..."

Techno's eyes were fixed on Bad, mind racing. He hadn't even noticed before how relaxed he was around him, it had always just felt like he'd known him his entire life despite it being only a few days...

Phil froze, looking disappointed as he shivered, "I'm being summoned back...I'm sorry I can't stay longer..." Techno's heart ached at the sadness in his voice, turning his body to the other and pulling him into a tight hug, "It's fine...until next time, Phil."

The fatherly judge smiled softly, hugging the war god back tightly for a few seconds until he finally let go, stepping back.

Techno watched as Phil disappeared into the treeline again before looking back to Bad. He picked up the sack and slung it over his shoulder again before crouching down.

'He's tired...' Techno thought, 'I'll let him sleep.'

The god looped his arms around Bad's back and under his knees, carefully and slowly lifting him up to carry him. The siren stirred only slightly in his sleep, leaning into the warmth of Techno's chest with a quiet murmur and a tiny, soft smile across his face. Techno felt a sheepish smile tug at his lips as he began to walk back to the ship, 'Another chance, huh Phil?' He held the other in his arms a little more securely as he took steady, even strides down the dirt path, 'Alright...one last time.'

=x=

"Look at them..." The voice drawled out, voice low as it purred, "How does it feel, Schlatt? Glorious? Perhaps you feel stronger, physically?"

The man felt lightheaded, skull throbbing in pain while shivering pleasantly at the feeling of nails trailing across the grooves and bumps of the horns. The ram horns had broken through his skin and now sprouted there- curling back and forward in an almost c-shape. Over the course of a few months now, the human could feel himself getting weaker and weaker in the legs until now it felt like pins and needles were all over them. If anything he felt miserable and weak, but the presence

of the false god made it a slight bit better.

His favorite. That's what Wilbur called him.

His favorite freak.

Schlatt almost preened at that title. He was able to endure so much more than the rest of Wilbur's pets- able to do exactly what he said without much of an argument just because it meant he could cause some chaos. That's why Wilbur favored him.

Now, barely able to walk and in constant pain-

He was scared of losing that favor. That little advantage.

Even with his head and arms laid in the Harpy's lap, kneeling on the ground beside him and one of those large wings draped over his back while Wilbur's fingers threaded through his hair and inspected the horns on his head...

He was still filled with an unnatural anxiety of losing the false god's interest.

"I'm starting to get the feeling back in my legs." He lied, and Wilbur's hands stopped, "....oh?"

"I might be able to do work-"

"No..." Wilbur growled out and Schlatt felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up, his hand wrapping around the base of one of the horns tightly, "Schlatt. Tell me the truth."

Schlatt yelped as Wilbur yanked his head back, golden eyes glaring sharply at him, "Do your legs still hurt?" Pain filled Schlatt's skull as Wilbur held him by the horn and he gave in easily, "Y-y-yes! Yes- god fuck please just- just let go I'm sorry-!"

Wilbur released him and let out a relieved sounding sigh, "Good. Then that means the transformation is working..."

"Wh-"

"NO!!" Schlatt bolted up as he awoke from his nap, squirming so much he fell from his chair. He got up and scrambled to the bathroom, heart racing in fear as his body was on autopilot, "No no no fuck please no-" He looked in the mirror and pulled around his hair, searching until he finally found them.

Relief filled him as he found the sanded bases of his broken off horns, touching the smooth surface shakily.

They hadn't grown back.

Thank the gods...

Letting out a sigh, he bowed his head and gripped the edges of the counter, taking deep breaths in an attempt to calm his wrecked nerves. These nightmarish memories were a reoccurring thing for him, and while he'd gotten used to them-

He hated that one. The one where he's so pathetically on his knees, his hair being touched and stroked while his head is in the lap of that winged *bastard as if he were a mere fucking dog-!!*

...Where he felt safe- all until he says the wrong thing and in an instant Wilbur is angry with him and he feels so much pain. When he found out what Wilbur was doing to him... *changing him...*

Schlatt jumped at the loud knocking at his door, wincing as it spiked his headache, "I'm comin' I'm comin'!!" He called, irritated. Who the fuck was at his shop at nightfall?

He made his way to the door as the knocking kept going, and the moment he yanked it open he snapped, "What the fuck is it-"

Schlatt stopped when his eyes met baby blue, seeing Tommy standing there with a sack of his stuff and looking like he was just barely holding it together.

"T-Tubbo's missing..."

Chapter End Notes

I'll give ya'll some free info on this chapter.

For the title: Each is a flower with a meaning, and each is in order of the part it represents.

The website I got these meanings from is this, if y'all wanna take a look:

<https://www.almanac.com/content/flower-meanings-language-flowers>

As for "Maverick Aspen", he is a MCYT too! The meaning behind his name in the fic is a bit hard to put together/pinpoint though, so a little warning that if you want to find it yourself, then look away because here it is:

Maverick does mean, in its basis, "Independent" / "Wildly independent"

Aspen is however a tree with gentle heart-shaped leaves.

Together, the name would mean Independent with a Gentle heart.

(a bit of a stretch, I know. But I wanted the perfect name for him since he's an OG

MCYT that I've watched for years and adore)

Zinnia & Tansy

Chapter Notes

Once again, thank you to my absolutely darling beta-reader~!!
His tumblr is [architech3702](#) and his ao3 is [IanLovesFanfiction](#)!

I've made a discord server dedicated to this au! To get an invite, just dm me on discord at [BubblyBee#9338](#) ! Hope to see y'all there!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"What?" Schlatt looked at Tommy in confusion, brows pinched together. The blonde growled in frustration, "That was said in the simplest way possible, how could you not understand!! Tubbo. Is. Missing!" His voice cracked, hands going up into his hair and pushing the golden blond locks back.

Schlatt winced and sighed, "Okay- okay..." He took a deep breath and shivered as a gust of wind blew at him. Finally taking in Tommy's appearance, he became acutely aware of the fact that the teen was shivering, his face and nose bright red and teeth chattering from the cold outside. Reaching out, he cupped the teen's face.

A chord struck in him as he felt the freezing flesh against his palm, the semi-fresh tear trail ice-cold under his fingers, "Amusix- Kid, you're as cold as ice! Get the fuck in here!" He quickly ushered Tommy in, taking the sack from his shoulders and propping it against the wall. He walked Tommy by the fireplace, quickly grabbing logs and tossing them in as the boy sat down.

"Crackle! I need your help for a second!" The ex-hunter rapt his knuckles against the floor. The teen watched in confusion as Schlatt huffed, "Fine, you did this to yourself!" He lifted his foot, waited-

Then, he slammed it down on the wood floor- his foot creating a loud bang that made the house's supports shudder and groan. Tommy jumped as the logs were engulfed in flames and a salamander climbed over them to lay on the top of the logs. It seemed completely untouched by the flames- actually, it almost looked like it was giving them off. The salamander had eyes fixed on Schlatt like it was glaring- but the ex-hunter didn't pay any mind. He moaned in slight pain and gripped the nearest surface, legs now shaking a bit. Tommy watched with slight worry as the man slowly recovered from...something.

"Sorry bud..." Schlatt stared right back at the salamander, "I know I'm interrupting your beauty sleep, but the kid is freezing and all my logs were wet. Your fire was kind of needed."

The salamander let out a pitched croaking noise at him before scrambling back into the logs-

disappearing.

"What... was that?" Tommy asked, hesitantly curious as he warmed by the fire. Schlatt steadied himself, ignoring the quiet cracking noises his leg bones made as they settled back into place. He tried to hide the slight pains with a cocky smile, "What, never seen a fire salamander?"

"No," For a moment, Tommy's mind wandered to a smidge of excitement, "Are they a type of tamable creature?"

"Well-"

"Like Werewolves?" Schlatt winced, heart aching from the question. He tried to cut Tommy off, but the blonde kept rambling, "Oh! Or like Mermaids? Griffins? Ravangers?" His eyes seemed to light up as he named the species. Schlatt could understand the childish wonder- once upon a time, he'd felt that same excitement too- but the wonder was misinformed and misplaced. He listened to Tommy ramble, hoping to take the teen's mind off his missing friend.

"Saytr's?!" Schlatt's patience snapped in a second.

"No, Tommy." The answer was clean and Schlatt's voice was sharp. Tommy was taken aback by the coldness in it, Schlatt's expression dark, "Kid, where did you hear this?"

"Hear... what?" Schlatt walked over and squatted on his haunches beside the blonde, "Who, in their fuckin' loose-screwed shit-for-brains mind- told you that *any* of these creatures were goddamn tamable?!" He asked in disbelief, "Tommy, none of these creatures are even domesticated- you can't even domesticate Mermaids, Saytr's, and Fae, they're conscious, living beings just like you and me! They have their own societies and cultures. Their own languages, studies, history-" He took a deep breath, "Kid... Tommy, you domesticate dogs. You domesticate cats. You domesticate birds- But never do you try to domesticate something that isn't meant to be."

Schlatt gestured to the fire, "Fire salamanders are no pet. Crackle is here because I saved him as an egg and he has no idea of how to survive in the wild. But he is not domesticated. He still bites and hisses at me like the little bitch he is, and he still spits fire at me too. He isn't my pet, but more like a companion and a roommate who's also a whiny bitch, but a useful one."

Red eyes bore into sky blue ones as Schlatt tried to search for any speck of understanding. Seeing only confusion, he finally sighed, "I'm... I'm sorry." Standing, he shook his head, "You didn't come here to get lectured by me- forget it..." He walked to the kitchen, grabbing a kettle, and filling it with water before lighting the stove. He put the kettle on the burner, "Now, what's this about Tubbo being missing?" Tommy took a moment before speaking, brushing off Schlatt's minor outburst. He cleared his throat as he turned back to the fireplace, "I-i'm not sure, really- he's just gone..."

The cold spot and unease settled into Tommy again, "Some guy offered to search in the forest, but I'm not sure I can trust him..." He heard Schlatt moving around behind him, opening cabinets and grabbing things.

"Did he give you a name?"

"Uhh...yea. Maverick, I think?" Schlatt grabbed a honey jar and tea leaves, waiting for the kettle to whistle before grabbing a mug and filling it with hot water. He dipped in the pouch of tea leaves before adding a spoonful of honey as Tommy tried to remember the mysterious man's full name, "Fuck- it was Maverick and then some like... weird tree name?"

Schlatt almost tripped in surprise, gripping the mug of hot tea, "Aspen?" It was Tommy's turn to be surprised, looking at Schlatt as he handed him the mug, sitting down beside him, "Yea! How did you-"

"Maverick Aspen? Black hair? Blue eyes? Peach skin that's slightly tanned? Shortass? Parental aura?" Tommy guffed, blinking with wide eyes, "Yes?!" A smile stretched across Schlatt's face, "Holy fucking shit- You're kidding me right? The fucking Captain himself is in town?!"

"You know him?!"

Schlatt leaned back on his palms, a nostalgic look in his eyes, "Well- not super personally know. The guy was friends with the man who taught me how to hunt- Antvenom." He chuckled, "Thought the guy was dead since he basically dropped off the face of the earth-" Schlatt paused, "Ah- but I won't bore you with the details..." The ex-hunter said playfully, fully aware of the expectant look on Tommy's face. Smirking, he pretended to yield, "Alright alright- Basically, from what my mentor told me; They nicknamed him Captain Sparklez- Cap for short. He wasn't a hunter per say, but he did a big thing that got him a lordship. He lived in a giant Manor, even married a Duke's daughter- lots of fucking money y'know? But for some weird reason, he just up and left! No explanation or anything. Even weirder- he took only one person with him, and that was his best friend. He didn't even run off with any more than a satchel of gold! It's just bizarre."

"He said he was an adventurer and like- two other things..."

"Well I mean- yea. He and his buddy were the ones that discovered quite a few abandoned temples in their day...adventure really just seemed to be their thing." Tommy gaped, shocked,

"Wow...he sounds..."

"Cool? Yea. A really nice guy too- respectable and honest. My mentor used to tell me there wasn't a single purely evil bone in the guy's body...." His smirk softened, "What I'm basically trying to say here Tommy, is if Tubbo really is in that forest- you can trust Cap to find and bring him back. He's an eccentric, weird guy- but he's not a bad person."

Tommy relaxed a bit, slightly assured. However, he was still a bit on edge- what if Tubbo was hurt? What if he couldn't move from where he was?

What if he was dead?

Tommy couldn't stand the thought of Tubbo hurt and alone- crying for help and...

Something inside him ached at the thought, and for some reason, all he could think was if Tubbo died he was so sure he would perish too. It was a feeling deep in his gut- something deep down that he couldn't understand but just *knew* . He'd always felt that he and Tubbo were fated to meet in a way- having an almost physical tug toward the other boy the moment he'd set foot in the orphanage. In the other's absence, he felt like his emotions were boiling over. A small controlled fire inside him was growing and he could feel it eating him from the inside out until he felt like he'd burst into ash and flames.

He needed to get back to Tubbo.

He needed to know he was safe.

=x=

"Focus, Wil..." The harpy muttered under his breath as he strained his mind, trying to reach deep into his soul. He had nearly enough magic to do this for a few moments, but he needed to know if he saw what he did correctly...

He just needed to gather enough first, though.

The magic prickled just at his fingertips, feeling it flowing through the hollowed-out bones in his large wings deliciously. It had been so long since he'd used so much of it, but he knew the migraine would be well worth it if he could just confirm this.

A spark struck him and his eyes snapped open in time with his wings, the room around him changing. The deep grey stone walls entrapping him melted away, replaced with walls of spruce and a floor of dark oak. A soft glow came from a smoldering fire, its flames crackling and burning with a welcoming warmth that Wilbur could not feel.

No, all Wilbur felt was the freezing cold of his cage- his confine's making his insides as cold as his outsides. As he took in the room, he saw someone he didn't expect.

"You...you..."

Schlatt sat there, the golden flames making his softly tanned skin glow and red eyes reflect a soft golden brown shade- face content as his deep brown hair was both neat and messy at the same time, gaze soft and expression peaceful as he fixed it on the warm fire.

Most shocking and infuriating of all?

The horns that Wilbur spent so much coaxing to grow from him were gone- like they'd never existed. Like he'd broken them off. Wilbur wanted to scream, his temper flaring. So much effort and the fucker still managed to slip from his grasp- even slotting himself back into society like a normal person.

Wasn't he traumatized? He killed so many innocents and even poisoned his best friend, all to appease the Harpy.

Wasn't he bitter and hateful? Wilbur mistreated him and constantly loved messing with his trust.

Wasn't he heartbroken? Wilbur had held his heartstrings and tugged them so many different ways, only to shatter it in the end.

...

No.

He was fucking Schlatt. The bull-headed monster hunter that was oh-so-resilient to all the shit Wilbur put him through.

And that just angered the Harpy further. Sadly though, his revenge would have to wait. He was running out of time.

Wilbur's head turned and he saw what he'd been seeking. Tommy's hair glowed like the sun and each time he blinked, his eyes turned from sky blue to pure gold- small flecks of orange and red appearing like flickers in a fire. He could see the flames in him stirring in irritation, and a smile crept across Wilbur's face as he noticed why.

"Oh Helios, where is your little Koray?" His voice took a sing-song like lilt, "Don't you know you shouldn't be straying too far from your master?" Wilbur strode behind Tommy, squatting down to level with him. He knew neither could see him, and his voice was nothing more than the wind- but it didn't stop his taunts, "A Sheep all alone without its guard dog, what will happen to its sheep? Will it be eaten? Fall in a ditch? Or maybe even a wolf will get their filthy hands on them..." Wilbur had a foul taste in his mouth from his own words- but they were nothing but the truth.

Human-beings were cruel.

It was in their nature.

The world around him started to flicker away as he spoke, eyes fixed onto Tommy's. He knew the boy could hear his voice oh so subtly in his head, as unease and anxiety appeared in his expression.

"You best find your way back to your Koray little one, lest he'd turn to freezing stone and you burst to firey ash." He stood, "And I'd much prefer you alive, Tommy."

With that, Wilbur stood, and the vision around him dropped in seconds. A mixture of emotions swelled in his chest- pity, anger, excitement, and sadness. More than he'd felt in years.

The pity and sadness...well, Tommy was so young still, and to be fated with such burdens... such a duty... such a role to play in the universe...

And he still didn't know what a gift he had? A powerful gift locked inside the body of a fragile human boy...He couldn't even control it from starting to swallow him the moment he was separated from that Tubbo boy. They'd need to work on that.

The anger... Schlatt. He would be a problem- a big problem that Wilbur needed to rid of. He'd influence Tommy too much. The half-Satyr would make him wary of Wilbur, and as much as it pained Wilbur to destroy one of his favorite pets- even if that pet was an ungrateful, shrewd, bastard- he knew he might even have to destroy him to get rid of him.

And excitement?

Wilbur was being presented a chance to influence the mind of a weapon even the gods would fear both the eradication and the power of. Enough time with the boy- mentoring him, teaching, influencing- and he'd be able to make him into a weapon of chaos and destruction. And with his other half, they could carve the way to a better, fairer world that they were the gods of.

Tubbo might be harder to influence, though- so Wilbur needed to prepare for that...

But dammit- Wilbur needed to *see* Tubbo to properly prepare. He needed more time to understand, but his magic was only so strong right now. He needed eye's on the inside- someone he had influence over without them knowing.

An idea clicked in Wilbur's mind, a slow smirk spreading across his face. He got on his knees and searched the hard ground until his hand grabbed something buried in overgrown vines. He twisted it and the ear-grating sound of stone grinding against stone echoed. The stones of his prison shuddered as some of the floor pulled away, a small platform rising. On top of it laid a coffin covered by a yellow flag with an "LC" sewn on it.

"Oh, my sweet little immortal~!" Wilbur sang, chuckling as he ripped away the flag and tore at the remaining foliage. They were such fools to bury him in the same room as they chained Wilbur- truly believing the man dead. No no no, Wilbur wasn't stupid enough to truly kill him. Stupid enough to give him to Schlatt as a toy, thinking the bastard would be cold enough to not get attached? Yes.

But not stupid enough to truly kill him.

He grabbed a stone from the ground, bringing it down roughly on the coffin latches before prying open the heavy lid.

The body was still fresh, looking as if he'd only died seconds ago.

Wilbur's shoulders began to bounce as he began to laugh.

"It's time to wake up. We have so much work to do..."

If nobody got it btw, Cap's wife is living her best life right now. Independent woman
pog.
Hope you enjoyed <3

Coriander, Pink Camillea, & Arborvite

Chapter Notes

Psst...Hey...

This fic has a discord now :)

<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

I love getting feedback and talking to get opinions, and there y'all can discuss things from theories, to just spamming me about the latest chapter, or even just hanging out and talking!

Credits to my beta-reader: His tumblr is [architech3702](#) and his ao3 is [IanLovesFanfiction](#) <3.

Anyways, enjoy the new chapter!

Vurb held the lantern high as he and his companions stood at the docks in silence.

"Well?" Tapl spoke up.

"Shush."

Tapl sighed, rubbing his eyes tiredly. He and Zelk sat on one of three trunks- the moon high in the foggy night sky, "I don't get it- the letter said he'd be here..." His ears flattened back, doubt filling him. Maybe he'd read Skeppy's letter wrong? Maybe they'd left already-

He yelped as there was a tap on his shoulder, whirling around and shining the lantern towards the person behind him. His eyes were dark brown with soft sunset orange highlights, paired with tanned skin and dark mocha hair. Iron armor adorned parts of his body, wearing a deep cyan cloak with the hood pulled over his head. His expression was blank, but his eyes held a lack of emotion that sent Vurb all the way back to his days as a pup. Where he would've normally whipped out his sword, he found himself with his tail tucked between his legs and cowering.

Then a flicker.

The man's eyes glowed orange and his pupils turned into cat-like slits, the smell of citrus and oak wood wafting ever so slightly making Vurb stand at attention. His eyes locked with the other's in response, flashing his eyes blue as his eyesight sharpened.

A smirk tugged at the other man's lips as Vurb grew excited, magic in the air crackling like static, "You're Vurb?"

"Mhm. Spifey?"

"You 'betcha."

Zelk cleared his throat beside them, arms crossed over his chest. Spifey turned to meet the other man's eye's and Vurb watched as they repeated the connection- Tapl watching in confusion in the background but not saying anything.

When finished, Zelk let out a rumble of satisfaction, "Alright, we can trust him Tap..." The man nodded and Spifey turned to Vurb again, "Skeppy's on the ship waiting, so follow me." Tapl stood and whispered something to Zelk, who gently hit him in the chest in response with an amused and fond smile before going to pick up one of the trunks. Tapl sighed and picked up a trunk as well, followed shortly by Vurb before the 3 of them followed Spifey along the docks.

=x=

"What's the plan?"

"There isn't one..." Tommy stared into the fire irritably. The air around him was hot and stuffy- his lungs burning with every inhale, "I'm not leaving without Tubbo." This was the full truth. Tommy refused to leave on the journey without the other boy. This was supposed to be *their* adventure- meant for them and them alone. Schlatt was coming along with them, sure- but it was nothing without Tubbo. It wasn't worth it without his best friend.

Schlatt looked at him sympathetically, and for a moment a similarity came to mind- his own heart aching at the memory.

"Amusix- Schlatt what hap-"

"What the fuck do you think happened?"

The other boy flinched back at his harsh tone, ears flattening back. The tall blond behind him glared at Schlatt sharply, mouthing 'apologize'. Schlatt looked at the werewolf and softened, sighing, "I'm... I'm sorry Traves. I got ambushed and I'm just irritated is all." At this, Traves smiled

and went back to patching up his wounds, tail wagging fondly. Cooper fixed his eyes on the other man, "Is Slime alright?" Schlatt snorted, "We talking mentally or physically?"

"Physically, obviously." Carson spoke up from sharpening his sword, an amused smile on his lips and tone playful, "We all know that Slime lost his marbles like- I think he said eight hundred somethin' years ago? Honestly, when is that guy ever mentally sound?" The others in the room made noises of joking agreement, Schlatt began to laugh only to wince in pain, Traves giving him a pout, "Schlatt stop moving please?"

"Sorry," Schlatt sighed, "And ah- no. He took a shot to the head that looked pretty bad, so I'd give him about 3 days or so before he pops up again." Schlatt had known Slime for a long while by now, and he'd learned how to track the severity of his death wounds and damage to his body to sum up how long it would take him before he'd show up again. He didn't like seeing how reckless the other was, but he had no say in the other man's actions.

After being alive as long as he had, Slime loved to see how many new and creative ways he could die, and that made him often very clumsy and reckless. He could remember the panic he felt the first time he witnessed Slime die. Slime had gotten his attention with a 'Hey newbie!', and the moment Schlatt looked at him he'd dived straight off the cliff with a wink. He was freaked by how casual the others were about it, but after a week Slime showed up again- laughing as he recounted how horrified Schlatt's face was when he jumped- he'd learned all about Slime's inability to actually die. Back then, he was shaken- but the memory now made him laugh. It was a fucked up thing to laugh at, but there was nothing about their little group that wasn't utterly fucked- aside from Traves that was.

"So that means we'll be settling here for a bit?" Ted spoke up, the reaper sitting on the log across him, "Sounds that way." Carson responded. Ted hummed and stood, "Alright then. And Schlatt?"

Schlatt looked up at Ted, and as the other man walked past he stopped and rested a hand on his shoulder, "Stop acting like you're invincible, because you're not. Your body is soft and you're mortal- the moment Slime died, you should have fallen back. Next time, do so."

Schlatt held the taller man's empty, cold gaze, and he shrugged off his hand, "Yea yea. Whatever..." Ted sighed before walking away- ducking back into the makeshift shelter.

Deep-down, Schlatt yearned to go back in time. He yearned to go back to the time where he still felt invincible, and where he still believed in 'nobody left behind'. Most of all, he yearned for his fucked-up little family. It wasn't much, but it was the most stable thing he'd ever had. He missed sweet little Traves with his reluctance to swear even once. He missed mean, protective Cooper. Carson, Ted, Noah, Josh, and...

Oh, he'd give anything to see Slime pull some dumb fucking stunt to get himself killed like jumping on a manticore's back or trying to fight a cockatrice. But those days were gone, and all that remained was the memories he had and the folded flag under his bed.

Schlatt stood up, "I'm gonna get you a pillow, you need some rest."

While he was reluctant, Tommy knew the older man was right. He didn't respond, simply pulling his knees to his chest as Schlatt went to grab the pillows.

=x=

Tubbo was cold.

As he laid against the wall, his legs were numb and he felt heavier than he ever had before.

Was it midnight, or past that? He couldn't tell anymore- slipping in and out of consciousness did that.

All he knew was he was cold. So cold that the crisp autumn night air that surrounded him somehow felt warmer than his entire body. Silently, he wondered if this was what death felt like- if he was dying and maybe soon Amusix would come to collect his soul. He had spent a long while searching for an exit, but soon it became evident that falling into this pit was a one-way trip. Eventually, he sat down to read Niki's journal- planning to search some more during the day.

After that though, Tubbo couldn't get up again- his body becoming heavier as it felt as if stones were weighing him down while his temperature dropped further and further.

He felt guilty, knowing that Tommy was probably searching for him. Probably worried sick.

Tommy...

He hugged the journal tighter to his chest, mind drifting to happier things. In his mind, he envisioned sunflowers. He envisioned warm sand beneath his feet and between his toes as he and Tommy raced across the beach in the summer- the hot sun beating down on them as they scavenged and searched for new adventures beside the crashing waves. He remembered how bright and triumphant Tommy's smile was when they found something new, and how his hair shined like the sun itself and sky blue eyes lit up with excitement.

Oddly enough, Tubbo had always been cold. Even during the blazing hot summers, Tubbo never felt the heat the way everyone else did.

Well, that was until he met Tommy.

In his early days at the orphanage, he always pretended that he felt the warmth under a blanket or by the fire when the truth was that he didn't. He had felt like a freak because of it- he didn't understand what others meant by feeling warm and he desperately wanted to, like he was searching for a missing puzzle piece. Then Tommy arrived, and something pulled himself toward the other boy. Something not even Tubbo could explain, nor did he really want to. But with Tommy, he felt warmth. It was like a missing piece of him had slotted into place, and suddenly what "warmth" was made sense.

...He missed warmth more than ever, now. He missed the heat Tommy practically radiated, and while he knew he'd just seen the other boy that morning it felt like it had been an eternity.

However, he couldn't do a thing about it- feeling like he did and stuck here.

So silently, Tubbo just hoped that by some miracle he'd be found.

=x=

The leaves crunched under his feet, taking long and careful strides across the forest floor. Cap knew this forest was prone to having cave-like pockets- remembering distinctly when he and X33n had walked through here the first time. The forest floor had collapsed right under him, and he fell into a deep hole.

The light spell in his hand illuminated the dark forest- the shadow-covered tree branches and bushes looking like monsters in the night. He knew better than to be scared of them though, the sight something familiar to him. He didn't dare call out the missing boy's name, as he knew full well the tricky creatures that lived in the woods. Fae loved to play games and mess with humans, as well as steal the names of others to force them to do their bidding.

Cap stopped as a putrid smell hit him, recognizing it as rotting flesh. His heart sank- rotting flesh meant a dead body, and that was all sorts of bad. He followed the smell to a deep pit, looking down it. He cringed as he saw a body at the bottom- covering his nose.

A whimper met his ears and he focused more magic into the light in his palm. It grew brighter and illuminated the entire place, his breath catching as he spotted the form of a child shivering against

the wall. It was suspicious but the adventurer felt instinct tug at his gut, something in him screaming to throw caution to the wind. Cap looked around quickly as he unhooked a thick rope from his belt, hurrying over to a stable looking tree and tying it around twice before throwing it down the pit.

He sharply tugged at the rope to check its strength before gripping it, muttering to himself as he slowly lowered into the pit.

Cap dropped to the bottom- carefully stepping over the body. He felt sick when he saw how bloody and dirty it was- a once clean white dress now battered and torn. He turned his attention to the child against the wall, walking over and checking the pulse. Feeling a pulse, he sighed in relief and gently shook him, "Hey...hey kid?"

There was a weak moan from him, eyes fluttering open to look at him, "Huh...?"

"Hey- are you hurt? Do you have a name kid?" In the light of the glow, the young boy matched Tommy's description to a T- but Cap wanted to be sure instead of jumping to conclusions. The boy shook his head lazily, "T...tubbo..."

Bingo.

Cap smiled, "Nice to meet you, Tubbo. Maverick Aspen, but you can call me Cap..." He reached to check Tubbo's temperature, eyes widening as he felt the flesh under his fingers. It was as cold as ice, "Dang, we have to get you warmed up fast- can you walk?"

Again, the boy shook his head. Cap sighed, "Alright, I'll have to carry you then..." He began to pick the boy up, slowly standing and shifting him so that he was on his back. Tubbo's arms wrapped around his shoulders weakly, his body quivering and obviously freezing. Before Cap could grab the rope, the boy croaked, "W-wait- Niki's book-"

"What?"

Tubbo gestured and Cap looked back to where he found Tubbo. A small, element-worn leather book laid there, and quickly Cap picked it up. He tucked it in his coat pocket before grabbing the rope- slowly climbing back up as the teenage boy clung to his back desperately.

When he crawled out the top, Cap's mind was on autopilot. He didn't bother to gather his rope, his body working twice as hard to maintain the magic keeping his light alive and carrying the freezing

teen on his back. He took off in the direction he came, counting markings of chalk he'd put on the tree's- showing him exactly where he needed to go.

=x=

Tommy was on his knees, staring into the night sky with wonder.

A creature flew in his vision- gorgeous and elegant. A large bird engulfed in flame, flying through the air majestically. A Phoenix, he realized. Suddenly, a smaller bird flew into his vision- pure white and glowing like the moon itself. They danced in the air- flying around in sync as if playing together. No matter how close the Phoenix was to it, the smaller bird was safe- it's flames only seeming to soothe it. The display was more beautiful than anything he'd seen, almost crying at the sight.

In an instant though, it was over. Suddenly, an arrow shot through the air and struck the smaller bird. In an instant, the phoenix let a shriek as the smaller bird fell through the air- flying after it. The small bird landed dead with a thud, and the phoenix landed beside it. Tommy's heart ached as the phoenix let out sounds that reminded him of wails of agony and mourning.

In moments though, the ground beneath him trembled like an earthquake and the sky itself was red like blood. Tommy's heart raced as he was engulfed in searing heat. He suddenly was in agony, heat in his body suffocating. With every breath, he began coughing up ash and soot- his skin feeling like it was smoldering and eyes burning. Look at his hand, he screamed as it was engulfed in flames. He scrambled up as it spread up his arm until the fire swallowed him entirely- leaving him in unbearable pain.

Tommy woke with a gasp, eyes wide as he screamed. Schlatt jumped, swearing loudly. Tommy's head whipped towards the door, not even hesitating as he scrambled up and opened it- running into the freezing night. Schlatt called after him, but his words were drowned out by everything around him. He sprinted through the streets, his lungs burning from the hot air he was breathing in.

He ran off the road and through the houses, scrambling up a steep grassy knoll. When he did, he spotted a form between the trees that he recognized as Maverick, a strangled noise leaving him as he spotted who was on his back, "Tubbo!!!"

Cap's head snapped up as he heard Tommy's voice, looking to see the teenager running over. Tubbo was suddenly more active, squirming weakly on his back- trying to move off, "T-Tommy!!!" He cried, and when Cap let him down he stumbled weakly- shivering in the cold. Cap spotted another man come over the hill, panting as he spotted them.

Tommy ran over and the two boys tumbled to the ground as they embraced each other tightly, laughing and crying in relief. Within moments, Tubbo felt the cold disappear and be replaced by heat. Tommy's internal temperature dropped to normal, gasping lungfuls of the crisp autumn air between his relieved laughter. The golden blonde clutched the younger boy to his chest tightly, words a mix of scolding and worry as Tubbo giggled.

Cap watched this display warmly, heart longing silently for someone he was searching for.

"If we want to take a safe voyage, we want to go through these waters." Cap traced a line from one coast and past a rocky island labeled 'Harpy rock', "This map is out of date, as that island has been completely abandoned for a few years now..."

"Really?"

"Yep..."

"Wow, neat-o~"

Cap looked at his friend, warmth blooming in his chest as he looked at him. His chestnut brown hair was swept and cleanly cut, soft brown eyes like pools that he could get lost in. X33n noticed him staring and met his eyes, grinning cheekily, "Have I ever told you that you have really pretty eyes?"

He made a strangled noise before a startled laugh left him, "No? What brought it up?" Cap quirked a brow at the brunette, watching his eyes widen and face tinged pink, "N-no reason! You just- they're a very lovely shade a blue is all! I didn't mean to be like- weird about it or anything it's just-" The young woman across from them scoffed, "Oh come on you lovebirds, just kiss already!" She gagged, and the two men looked at her and laughed.

Kara rolled her eyes, long red hair neatly done, and wearing a deep grey gown that allowed for easy movement. The three of them had been best friends since they were children, and they were currently plotting on how to make Cap and X33n disappear completely. The wedding band on Cap and Kara's fingers meant nothing more to each other than a reminder of the cleverest plot the two of them had ever made.

The plan began when Kara became distressed due to her father trying to force her into a marriage. The woman didn't want to marry, and she vented her sorrows to the adventurer. In return, Cap

vented to her his own sorrows- the young women that swarmed him obsessively, the pressure from his own family, and the one place his mind was stuck on: him and X33n childhood dreams to explore the entire world with only each other.

At the end of the conversation, Cap slept on it, and when he woke up with the most brilliant plan- a solution to both their problems. He had been granted a lordship, and with it, that made him a viable suitor for the Duchess. He would marry Kara, and after one month he, Kara, and X33n would make secret preparations for him and X33n to run away and disappear- leaving Kara still legally married, but with the freedom to run the house. No man could force her to do anything, and she could live her days in luxury and freedom.

She'd pretend to be heartbroken by his sudden departure, but after a while, everything would return to normal and nobody could ever say a thing against it. Meanwhile, he and X33n would be set with a fair amount of gold and a dependable vessel to sail across the sea to a place where nobody would know them- providing them a fresh new start with only each other.

Two best friends against the world.

Schlatt looked at Cap from across the knoll, taking in his appearance with slight surprise. He looked slightly older, but it made sense. It had been quite a few years since he'd seen the other man, and it was nice to see he hadn't changed too much. The noirette met his eyes and his face morphed into something like bewilderment- as if trying to place where he'd seen him before. The brunette raised a brow, smirking a bit in amusement. Instantly, the older man's eyes went wide with recognition and he began walking over, stopping in front of him.

"Schlatt?!" He asked in surprise.

Schlatt snickered, "Hey."

Lily-of-the-Valley, White Camellia, & Rhododendron

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Credits to my beta-reader: His tumblr is [architech3702](#) and his ao3 is [IanLovesFanfiction](#) <3.

!!!!Warnings for lots of violence and slight gore in this part as well as hints towards things like monster/hybrids being enslaved!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Vurb awoke the next morning, he prepared himself to meet the rest of the crew- those he would be working with. He knew he would be working with the expert, as that would get the most effective result in this search. Tapl and Zelk would be working with Spifey, as the three of them were the fighters. Two great minds, three excellent contracted hunters, a Captain, and...

Vurb's stomach sank.

And a demon.

A demon he would be forced to hang around.

Vurb wrapped a fist around Xisuma's emblem- murmuring a silent prayer for safety. It wasn't that the werewolf had anything against demons in general- he of course didn't believe in that idiotic stigma of *all* demons being horrid and evil- but past experiences with demons in less-than-ideal circumstances always filled him with terror and anxiety. Vurb had been tragically born into surroundings that birthed those same stigmatic ideas about werewolves, and he'd seen the bottom of the barrel when it came to the treatment creatures faced at the hands of humans.

Demons that escaped the Netherworld often did so through making deals with humans or by persuading others to summon them. However, he'd seen that even after escaping the burning depths that were the Nether the world above was no different. Demons still faced the imagery that their menacing appearances and powers painted- lies from people like the Navy spoke as a way to instill fear into the people as to control them. They did the same thing with werewolves like Vurb and feline hybrids like Zelk. They claimed that they were all feral and wild, and that what they did was "taming and domesticating them to be civil."

There wasn't anything that smelled fouler than that load of utter bullshit.

What they did was the opposite. Werewolves were often used in hard labor- forced to work the more dangerous or strength required jobs in mills and fields. Feline's were often used in more inappropriate means with their abilities, and Vurb cringed at the thought. Zelk suffered in that trade, and Vurb couldn't even imagine what he'd gone through. Sometimes, for sickening entertainment, they'd pit creatures against each other in fights to the death- like they were animals. Like they were nothing but disposable.

So no, Vurb did not have anything against demons. In fact, he'd tried multiple times to get over the terror and anxiety that faced him- but he could never forget those days. He could never forget about piercing golden eyes, sharp twisted horns, razor-like claws, and jagged teeth.

Now, he can only hope the demon he'd face now wouldn't trigger those memories.

Vurb combed his fingers through his hair and took a deep breath before opening the door and walking out of his cabin, the wood beneath his soles creaking. He followed the path Spifey had led the three of them until he reached the ladder, climbing up and on the deck. On the deck stood a group of three, one of which he recognized as Skeppy. The man looked tired, light circles under his eyes and stance fidgety. "...so he's...what again?"

"A werewolf. I trust that won't be a problem?"

"Tch. What do I look like, a slaver?" Skeppy snorted, smiling playfully, "Nope, you look like a woman."

"Oh haha." The other person responded, "No. It won't be a problem at all-"

"Hello?" Vurb walked over, only to stop in his tracks as the other person turned to him. Immediately, his heart leaped into his throat and his tongue tied itself in knots- taking in chestnut brown hair tied back in a short ponytail, soft-looking peach skin, and eyes that sparkled like sapphires. They wore a loose silk shirt only slightly lighter than his eyes, a black corset, and dark grey pants with black boots to match- standing only an inch shorter than Vurb with their hands on their hips. There was something distinctly feminine about them, but at the same time he remembered Skeppy didn't say anything about a female crewmate. He gaped for a few minutes, feeling heat rush to his face as he had the distinct feeling that he looked like a fish gasping for air.

Noticing his speechlessness, the brunette's lips slowly pulled into a smirk and he raised a brow, "You alright ther-"

"Y-you're really pretty-" Vurb blurted out before flinching, mentally hitting himself. Pretty?

Seriously? The other looked surprised, face tinged a soft red, "I...thank you?"

"I-i uh-" Vurb attempted to recover, fumbling over his words, "I-i bet your feet are really pretty too-" He slapped a hand over his mouth, stomach flipping as he began to consider if now was a good time to jump overboard. Feet?? What the absolute fuck was that- of all things he had to say!

There was stunning silence before a grin broke out on the man's face, giggles escaping that devolved into stifled bubbling laughter. Vurb faltered, eyes downcast and ears flattening back as he burned with embarrassment- pushing down a soft whimper as he listened to the stranger's laughter.

After a moment, the man calmed down and weakly giggled, "O-okay, I like you already- that was too fucking cute-"

Vurb's ears perked back up, surprised by the compliment. He thought his fuck up...was cute? He cocked his head in confusion, and the man awed, "Xisuma, you're like a puppy-" He held a hand out to Vurb, eyes lit up with amusement, "I'm Finn Irving. You?"

Slowly, Vurb took his hand and shook it, "Ah...V-Vurb..."

After the werewolf let go, Finn's hands returned to his hips, "I'm the mermaid and siren expert, by the way. I'm assuming you're the tracker Skeppy hired?"

Vurb nodded, and Skeppy perked up anxiously, "I hate to interrupt but uh- m-my shell?"

"Oh- right!" Vurb reached in his pocket and pulled out the soft pink shell, handing it back to the noirette carefully. As he did so, he brushed their hands together and reached to see Skeppy's aura- unsurprised to find that it was a dark, murky brown. When Skeppy got it back, he held it tightly with a shaky sigh of relief, the tension in his shoulders slowly relaxing as the aura around his hands- where he held the shell- shifted to a soft pink. Silently, he thought back to what he'd read, 'Murky brown, fear of letting go...pink, love...'

"Thank you..." He murmured, slipping the shell into his pocket, "I'll let you guys get to know each other- we're heading to the last place Bad was seen, and then you can start tracking from there."

"Got it."

Skeppy walked away, slipping into the captain's quarters quietly. Finn's face dropped, twisting into something of concern as he watched the captain leave. Vurb's ears perked up as he murmured under his breath, "Xisuma help that man, bottling himself up like that..."

The dark brunette cocked his head again, "Bottling himself up?"

Finn sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, "Sorry it's just-" He sighed in frustration before giving Vurb a more strained smile, "Let's head to the study and we'll talk there-" Someone behind Finn cleared their throat, and Vurb jumped as he finally noticed the figure behind the other man, "Oh- shit, right..." Finn rolled his eyes a bit, "Vurb, this-" He gestured to the figure behind him, "Is A6d."

Vurb froze as he took in the other man, instantly recognizing the traits of a demon. A6d had a deep black blindfold over his eyes and short, messy black hair. His skin was grey like stone and he stood taller than both Finn and Vurb, the skin of his hands a more Paynes grey with pitch-black fingertips ending in sharp claws. The placid, unamused and *almost* irritated look on his face unnerved Vurb, and without a word he held out his hand in offering. Vurb nervously took it, peeking at the demon's aura in the process. The intimidating dark pink and clouded red aura that surrounded him set Vurb on edge, a chill going down his spine.

'Dark pink- untrustworthy. Deceit. Dishonesty. Clouded red- negative energy. Deep-seated anger you can't let go, but hide...'

He didn't like that one bit.

Letting go, he shrunk back a bit. Even through the blindfold, his gaze seemed to pierce right through him- staring right into his soul...

"Are you alright?" Finn's voice brought him back and Vurb tore his eyes from A6d- focusing on the other male instead, "Y-yea...im uh...just fine..." Finn tilted his head, looking like he wanted to push more before simply sighing and taking Vurb's arm. Pulling him to follow, he hummed, "C'mon. We gotta get started..."

=x=

The moment Bad woke up, he was uneasy. The air around him felt heavier, and in some way it felt almost horribly familiar. He yelped as he slid off his bed, the boat rocking violently.

He scrambled up and held onto the wall, unable to register what had just happened until he heard a crack of thunder and the pounding of rain.

'A storm...' Bad thought to himself, 'They're gonna need all hands on deck- why didn't they wake

me?!"

He scrambled up, swinging his door open and stumbling to the steps as water sloshed in the halls. He could hear the other's shouting at each other over the rain, and as he stood on the slippery deck the uneasy feeling only grew. The waves were dark, crashing and pounding against the ship. He spotted Dream at the wheel, seeming focused as he gripped it. Everything above deck that could be moved below had been.

Bad took one step and suddenly the ship was struck again, tilting to the left. The impact sent him to his hands and knees, the rain making getting a grip on the wooden impossible as he began to slide toward the rail-

"George! Deck upper left!" He heard Sapnap scream over the rain.

"Got him!!"

In seconds the prince was in front of the ship's edge, grabbing Bad under his arms and pulling him up and against him. He wrapped an arm around Bad's waist tightly, the other arm wrapping around the rail, "One hand on me, the other on the rail and hold on like your life depends on it!" Bad did as George instructed, gripping the rail one hand and the one around the taller's waist. His stomach dipped as the ship lurched down again- their combined weight helping to hold each other steady.

When the ship steadied again, George let go and shouted over the storm, "Whatever you do, don't pull Dream out of focus! He needs all his energy to direct the ship so we don't hit any rocks-"

"Rocks?! Aren't we at open sea?!"

George shook his head, "No, we-"

"Big one incoming!!" The brunette tensed, immediately going to grab the rail again. This time, the wave hit them and Bad shivered at the familiar feeling of saltwater on his skin- George coughing as some got in his mouth. It passed and George talked hurriedly, "A storm formed out of nowhere and blew us off-course! We don't know what the hell happened or where such strong winds are coming from, but it's like it's alive and it's just blowing us right into the rocks!"

A soft sound hit the siren's ears, and his eyes grew wide with fear as he realized the familiarity.

'A storm out of nowhere.'

'It's like it's alive.'

They were fucked.

They were so, so badly fucked and only Bad knew that.

"Bad? You need to get inside-!"

"George, this isn't a normal storm!!!" He cried, shaking his hand off his arm, looking into the water over the rails and searching it, "Well we know that we just don't- what are you doing?!" Seeing nothing, his eyes strained and searched the waters away from them.

His voice caught in his throat as lightning lit up the sky and he spotted another vessel dangerously close to them and the rocks. It sailed past, and Bad could see the men aboard running around and panicking. Focusing, he tried to listen closer over the pouring rain.

One heartbeat.

He heard a delightful, alluring song over the stormy waves.

Two heartbeats.

A shriek hit his ears and his eyes flew wide, looking just in time to see the vessel smash into the rocks. Screams and shouts filled his ears, "We have to go- George we don't need to ride out the storm, we need to get out *now!!*"

"Bad, what are you talking about?!"

"Sirens! Pure blooded, hungry, muffin-ing sirens!!" He pointed to the crashed vessel frantically. Bad looked at the other three males, seeming relieved to see that they were still acting and doing their jobs normally. Techno was helping Sapnap with the sails, completely focused. George strained his eyes, and sure enough, he could see men being snatched from the sinking vessel and dragged into the water- however...

"Bad- shit, look..."

The noirette looked back to the vessel and his hand went over his mouth as he saw a small rowboat in rough water, two people inside and holding on desperately. The clearly larger of the two held onto the smaller, shielding them from any external harm. He could see a few sirens circling the boat, eager to get their hands on their victims on it, "Poor guys..." George murmured, and Bad was frozen. Every part of him urged him forward, a mysterious force tugging him to do something.

His body worked faster than his mind, not giving it a second thought as he hurriedly was removing his shirt. George looked at him in confusion, before suddenly putting two and two together, "Bad- Bad don't you *dare* do what I think your gonna do-"

"I can save them-"

"You are going to get yourself killed!!"

"Well I can't just say I didn't even try!!" He let his shirt drop to the deck, eyes fixed on the rowboat. Bad climbed over the rail, shakily looking into the crashing waves below him, "Bad-"

A wave rose and the siren jumped, diving into the frigid water. As soon as he hit the water he began to change, snowy pale skin turning Payne's grey and legs melding into a pitch-black tail. He let out a breath, his lungs burning and blood pumping through his body to accommodate the quick change. His glowing eyes searched through the water, currents strong as he fought against them. He spotted the bottom of the boat and saw that the two sirens circling it were gone. With a beat of his tail, he sped through the water- the large, sharp spine of his tail flaring out as he kept a lookout. He surfaced just beside the boat, yelping as the muzzle of a gun was in his face. The larger of the two held it with a trembling hand, eyes full of fear not for himself, but for the male beside him. Unable to make out their looks in the darkness, he spoke quickly, "I'm not going to hurt you!"

The man seemed surprised by his voice, slightly lowering the gun, "Y-your not like them?"

Bad nodded, "That ship," He gestured to 'The Manhunt', which was quickly sailing away and against the waves, "belongs to my friends- we can help you two." Without another word Bad dove under the waves and started pushing the rowboat, muscles working full time to keep the waves from capsizing or tossing the small vessel as he tried to catch up. Anxiety wracked him as he kept an eye out for the other sirens, knowing they were lurking.

When the bottom of 'The Manhunt' came into view, Bad was surprised. This had gone too smoothly...

He called up to the boat and quickly George and Sapnap came into view, George letting out a surprised laugh as Sapnap cried out in excitement, "Bad you fucking mad fish!!!"

"Language!!!"

The two dropped down a ladder and a rope. Bad grabbed the rope and tied the boat in place. The two in the boat moved quickly, the larger helping the smaller to grab and climb the rope. In the corner of his eye he saw a flash of scales.

He went back under just in time to see the tail disappear into the black abyss.

'It's going to jump at them...'

Bad copied the move, diving deeper before making a sharp turn upwards, steadily speeding up to break the water. When he did, there was a flash of lighting as he heard the siren shriek. Time moved in slow motion as the siren spotted him a second too late, colliding with him midair as his claws snatched their arms and broke through the tough skin. He dragged them back into the water with him, taking advantage of their stunned state to move around their back and coil his tail around theirs.

There was a scream of pain as blood seeped into the water. His sharp spines scratched their scales until they broke through and punctured the soft flesh underneath.

He could feel himself losing his senses as more blood gushed into the water. Hooked teeth bared, Bad bit into the junction of the sirens neck, arms and tail constricting around them like a snake. The venom in his saliva started working the moment it touched the fresh wounds, blood getting in his mouth. He fought hard against the primal urge to go into a feed frenzy, unhooking his teeth just in time to feel sharp claws dig into his shoulders and pry him off.

Bad screamed in pain, thrashing in the grip as he let go- the other siren paralyzed and twitching as it sank to slowly die on the seafloor.

He whirled around, swinging his tail to try and strike the siren behind him- adrenaline numbing the pain in his shoulders. He narrowly missed, his glowing white eyes meeting glowing purple.

The siren had dusty brown hair, a sneer on his face as he fixed his eyes on Bad. The two circled each other as the siren hissed lowly, "You know at first I thought you were a rouge...but now I see you just a filthy fucking half-bred who doesn't know their damn place..."

He was breathing heavily as he tried to control himself, a frenzy edging in his mind like creeping

vines as he refused to answer. The sirens' words stung him to the core and they both knew it, a smirk stretching across the sirens lips. Through blurry eyes, he could read the name "Fire" on the siren's arm before growling and lunging at him with a shrill scream. The "Fire" seemed caught off guard by this and Bad swiped across his face, claws leaving deep gashes. He bit into Bad's arm and he cried in pain before deciding to take the advantage, pulling Fire so that his back was to Bad's chest and his teeth embedded into Bad's forearm pinned him there.

He thrashed and Bad struggled to hold on, freehand reaching around and raking across the other sirens chest behind scratching and cutting at the skin. Fire's hands reached and Bad jolted, whimpering as his claws hooked and scratched at Bad's side.

Baring his teeth again, Bad turned his head and bit into Fire's neck- letting his venom seep in before ripping the chunk of flesh and muscle away. He spat out the chunk as he shoved the other siren away- blood filling his senses as his mind grew cloudy. Bad watched as Fire tried to stop the blood flow, but soon Bad's venom took his system and paralyzed him- sinking to the bottom as he bled out.

His heart thundering in his chest, pumping adrenaline through his body as he shook. There was so much blood in the water, ripping at his sanity and filling his clouding mind with the need to feast. To rip and tear. To gorge himself on his kills...

He needed to get out of the water and fast. The metallic taste of blood on his tongue and the scent in the water was too much for him and not even his mermaid side could fend it off.

Bad emerged from the water and grabbed the side of the row boat, trembling and whimpering as the pain caught up with him- body aching. He tried to speak, but all that left his lips was soft chitters and whines- vision blurry and voices muffled in his ears.

Suddenly, the boat rocked and someone reached in the water- scooping him out in them before hoisting him up to someone else on the deck. When they took him and hoisted him onto the deck, pain spiked when pressure was put on one of his wounds. Bad screamed and thrashed in the person's arms, causing them to stumble and fall back on the deck in surprise. When they let go he lashed out, instinct taking over as he bit down hard on the person's forearm. His venom worked even faster to seep into the fresh wounds, but this time he didn't pull off. He bit harder when the person tried to pry him off, until slowly he heard soft whispers in his ear. A hand slowly and gently stroked his hair, the calm reaction of the person helping his nerves to relax and the taste of fresh blood of his tongue so satisfying yet making him want to belch.

Bad slowly released his bite on the person's arm, blood running from his mouth as he started to cry- ashamed of himself.

"I-i'm sorry..."

"I know..." A deeper, quiet voice responded as he was pulled to their chest- the pain of his wounds making him lose consciousness as darkness edged at his vision.

Slowly, he succumbed to sleep- too exhausted to fight back.

George watched as Techno walked off with Bad in his arms, murmuring about going to patch him up before heading below deck.

The brunette ran to the captains quarters, shutting the door behind him as he turned his attention to the two men Bad had helped.

The larger wore a deep green overcoat and a blindfold one of his eyes, a small pack at his feet. The smaller wore nothing but a ragged off-white shirt and brown pants, face buried in the others chest as he curled into him. A cat tail was curled in and ears were flattened back- the color pattern alike to a siamese. His skin was littered with cuts and bruises, but most noticeable were the iron clamps around his wrists and ankles- the chains attached appearing to have been broken off crudely and in a hurry.

George gripped the blankets in his arms tighter, heart aching as he got an idea of where the smaller man had come from.

"How are you two doing?" He approached them, handing them the blankets. The older man smiled softly, radiating warmth and genuine gratitude as he draped the blankets over the smaller, "Better now...thank you so much..."

"Please- don't thank me. Bad was the one to save you two..."

"Still. You didn't have to take us aboard and you did. It means so much..." George smiled, heartwarming at the phrase. There was a soft whine from the smaller and he decided to back off, "I'll leave you two be but ah..." He looked at them curiously, "What are your names?"

The man chuckled, "Sam, and this is Ant." He gestured to the cat hybrid, and George nodded,

"Well, welcome aboard The Manhunt you two."

"Pleasure to be here, George."

Chapter End Notes

Badland's boys pog.

Also what did I say? If I give you a relaxed, soft happy chapter, always prepare for the next chapter to hit hard :))))

Learning from mistakes & Forming new bonds.

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Credits to my beta-reader: His tumblr is [architech3702](#) and his ao3 is [IanLovesFanfiction](#) <3.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was a heavy thud as leather hit leather, Spifey's arms blocking another one of Tapl's kicks. He slid his arm around the other man's shin and hooked around, gripping it before using his body weight to pull him off his other foot. Tapl yelped as he landed flat on his back, groaning in pain as Spifey let go of his leg, "Look I know you seem to have strong legs, but you *have* to stop relying on that." The hunter chuckled as Tapl huffed, face reddening in embarrassment as he forced himself to get up, "Yea yea..."

He heard a snicker and looked at Zelk, the feline hybrid watching them with eyes sparkling in amusement, "What's so funny?" He barked, and Zelk smirked, getting up and walking over. He leaned up and pressed a kiss to Tapl's nose, grinning slyly, "You're so cute when your frustrated~"

Tapl grumbled, cheeks burning as he looked away and nudged past the hybrid to sit down, "I'm out, good luck." The other male giggled as the dark brunette sat down, turning to Spifey.

The two readied their stances- bringing their fists up and knees bent, "You sure you wanna fight me and not your boyfriend, pussycat?~" The other man teased. Zelk smiled sweetly before lashing out. Spifey jumped in surprise and blocked the punch, countering it with a kick that the hybrid dodged easily. He dropped down and swept his leg to trip Zelk, but Zelk easily jumped back and forward. Before Spifey could stand and get his balance, Zelk kicked and firmly planted a foot on his chest. The force sent the hunter stumbling back and hitting the wall with a groan, ending the fight in seconds.

Zelk stood, a victorious and smug smile on his face as he tightened the loose braces on his arms, "Don't patronize me, buck teeth. Doesn't do you any good other than make you look like an ass."

Spifey chuckled in slight pain, "Alright, I deserved that..." Zelk huffed, turning with a swish of his tail, "You need to work more of defense rather than offense- you were way too easily caught off guard by a simple pun-" He yelped when Tapl grabbed his wrist, pulling him in his lap, "Okay, somebodies a bit too cranky and snappy. C'mere..."

"Tappy I don't-"

"Shhhhhh break time~"

Tapl scratched behind Zelks ears and shortly he made a soft huff-like noise- his pupils visibly expanding. His protests stopped, he melted into it and rested his head in the human's lap. Spifey stood, snickering, "Oh, so *now* we're taking a break?"

"We gotta. Zelk gets more violent and has less restraint the more irritated he gets- so he needs some cool-down time."

Spifey walked over, sitting beside the pair and watching, "Is he...purring?"

"Nope. Tigers and Tiger hybrids don't purr, but they do chuff! Just means he's happy or friendly."

"So basically the same thing as purring?"

"In a way, yes."

The hunter smiled a bit, "He really is a pussyc-"

"Please, stop calling him that." Tapl snapped, looking at Spifey with stern eyes, "It's really not okay and it's not that funny for him or me..." Spifey faltered, "I...i'm sorry?"

"It's fine, just don't do it again." He paused, threading his fingers through Zelks hair, "Pussycat was often a term used for hybrids like him in brothels. It's...not a positive or fun part of his past he needs to be reminded of and it bothers him a lot more than he lets on..." A sudden realization hit Spifey and guilt stirred in his stomach, silent as he looked at the sleeping feline. When relaxed like this, he was admittedly cute- hell, both the other hunters were- and it was nice to see him with something other than a smug smirk or mischievous grin, "I'm...really sorry."

"You didn't know, it's really fine..."

"I-"

"Spifey." Tapl put a hand on his shoulder, eyes full of sympathy as he smiled softly, "You're fine. Really. I made the same mistake too when I met Zelk. You never know until someone tells you, and that's why I'm telling you- so you can correct that mistake and never make it again. Okay?"

Spifey felt his face warm as he looked directly back in the other hunters eyes, "O-okay..."

=x=

"...So He just bottles things up and it's ridiculous! I mean- has that man never heard of talking to someone?? What is his problem!" Finn rambled as the two sat in the study. A6d stood in the corner, almost as if brooding as he watched out the porthole. Vurb nodded in understanding, multitasking between potential routes and listening to Finn. The light brunette seemed to be more of an expert with narrowing down how Bad would move as apparently the siren was traveling by land and on boat- presumably with a crew.

"Hey, what about the strait?"

"Pirates don't move through there- mermaid territory and mermaids ain't their business. It's a mutual respect type thing- They don't bother the pirates, pirates don't bother the mermaids. Much better than the Navy."

"Ah...The swamp?"

"No way in hell. Nobody goes in and comes out alive- Well, nobody but the crew of the Golden Goat-"

"Golden Goat?"

Finn looked at him in disbelief, "Wait wait wait- you haven't heard of the Golden Goat? The dreaded Captain Doc M. and his right-hand Rendog?" Vurb shook his head and Finn's pretty blue eyes lit up with excitement, "Ohoho- okay, later tonight come to my room- I have a book of everything i've gathered on them. That crew is the most feared on the seas- and the right hand is a werewolf like you too!"

Vurb sat at attention, ears perking up and tail wagging a bit, "Wait, really?"

"Yep! I-" Suddenly, Finn's face twisted in pain and he clutched over his heart. Vurb's ears flattened back again and he grew concerned, "Finn?" The other man shook his head, shakily getting up, "I- i'm fine- just- B-be right back-"

He scrambled out the door as his vision swayed, growing warm as he made his way to his room, "Fuck- fuck why now-" He shoved the door open and stumbled, a loud crash and the clattering of crystal bottles on the floor as he accidentally hit the vanity. Feeling like he was about throw up, he hurried to the desk.

Finn rummaged through his desk drawers, jumbled thoughts making it so he was unable to think straight, "Where where where-" He slurred, his heart pounding in his chest. His hands shook, body overcome with chills yet at the same time feverishly hot, breaths shallow. He felt sick to his stomach, his head dizzy with a pounding headache.

No...he didn't simply *feel* sick, he *knew* he was sick.

Yet his medicine was nowhere to be found.

His legs grew weak and he slumped over his desk. Tears gathering in his eyes, Finn felt sluggish.

He felt like he was dying.

Fuck- he was dying, and he wasn't ready yet.

Darkness crept in his vision, and slowly he felt his life trickling away.

Something cold pressed to his lips and a familiarly bittersweet substance slid across his tongue and down his throat. He shivered, swallowed it before weakly grabbing the bottle and downing the rest. Shaking, the potion worked quickly as it spread through his limbs and his heart slowed to a normal pace.

Eyes fluttering, his vision cleared and he was met by someone he didn't recognize kneeling by his side. It was a boy with deep brown eyes and hair, a dirty green mask over his mouth and a faded, old-looking blue striped shirt and brown pants. His skin color looked almost...split- having dark

skin on one side and pale white skin on the other.

Finn groaned softly, looking at the bottle to see it was his medicine, "How...Who are you?" Cringing, he realized his voice was slightly hoarse. He looked at the boy, but the boy simply didn't answer- looking anxious as he kept glancing at the door. Finn tilted his head, "You...aren't supposed to be here, are you?"

The boy looked at him and shook his head, "Can you speak?" He nodded, "So you're just...selectively mute, I think it's called?" A second nod, eyes having relief at someone understanding. Feeling a bit of sympathy, Finn smiled a bit sadly, "Can you point to where you found this?"

Without nodding, the boy stood and Finn noticed the long mouse-like tail whipping behind him. He was slightly shorter than Finn- surprisingly- and was barefoot too. Walking over to the bed, he pointed under it.

"It was under my bed?" Finn asked in confusion. There was no way he'd put it under there- it was too low for his arm to reach under in a hurry- so why was his medicine there?

The medicine was the only thing keeping him alive from the disease that had been slowly killing him throughout his life. It was too important for him to hide so recklessly...

But if he hadn't done it...

"Did...you hide it under there?" The boy shook his head frantically. Finn sighed, "I'll...need to get you something to write on..." He pinched the bridge of his nose, "Look, you can hide out here in my room if you'd like just don't make too much noise- I need to get back to the others..." He smiled a bit as he walked out of the room, "And- thank you. I owe ya one, kid."

Without another word, he left the room and headed back to meet the others. As he entered the study, Vurb looked at him with relief, "Finn! Are you okay??"

"Just peachy- sorry about that." His eyes flickered over to A6d, and the demon quickly looked back out the porthole. He could sense surprise from the noirette- though from what he could only guess. Brushing it off, he walked back over to the table casually and smiled, "Now, back to charting that course?" Vurb perked up, giving a slightly nervous smile back as his cheeks tinted a soft pink, "R-right..."

In the middle of the night, he felt chills over his body despite the warmth of the body next to him and the blanket over them. The bed was much warmer than the one in the orphanage, but Tubbo only assumed that was because of the thick fleece blanket and the fact that the mattress was much better than the orphanages. He could faintly hear Schlatt and Cap talking quietly in the main area of the house by the fire, slightly surprised by the fact they were still awake.

"Psstt..."

Tubbo sat up abruptly, jumping as he met the eyes of a woman sitting by the bed. Her head was in her arms, tilted curiously as she watched him. When he looked at her, she smiled- a beautiful almost angelic face framed by pale golden locks, *"Hi."*

Her voice was a whisper- almost like it was lost in the wind- and oddly enough, he wasn't scared. Something about her told him she meant no harm.

"Who...are you?"

Her brows knitted in confusion, and she looked at him like she was trying to remember, *"I...Don't know."*

"You don't know?"

She shook her head sadly, eyes downcast, *"Do... **you** know?"* Tubbo looked to check if Tommy was still asleep, smiling when he saw he was. He scooted closer, whispering, "Well- no...are you the dead lady? The one in that pit?"

"Pit...I...maybe? I-i don't remember dying..." She murmured, "If you are, then i've just been calling you Niki..." Tubbo smiled hopefully. The woman smiled softly as she let out light laughter, *"Niki...I like it..."*

Tubbo reached out, "I-"

"Tubbo? Who are you talkin' too..." The boy jumped at his friend's tired voice, and in a moment the woman was gone. Tubbo looked at the spot in disappointment before sighing, "N...nobody..." Tommy grumbled, "Right, well 'Nobody' needs to wait till morning to talk to you. It's sleep time..."

He sat up and hooked an arm around the younger's shoulders, pulling him back to lay down. Tubbo snickered, disappointment long forgotten. With the chill gone, warmth and comfort lulled him back to sleep...

By the time Niki returned, she saw him sleeping and smiled with unknown fondness. She gently pulled the fleece back over the two boys before turning and disappearing once more to let them rest.

=x=

Bad awoke, groaning and sitting up as his body whined in protest, "You're awake..." He jumped at the voice beside him, looking to see Techno sitting by his side and bandaging his arm. It was a deep bite, the flesh around it a deep grey turning black tone- and suddenly, Bad remembered the moments before he'd passed out.

"Y-your arm!"

Techno raised a brow, "Yea? What about it?"

Tilting his head, he looked at the other man with clear confusion and concern, "You...you're not poisoned?" Techno shook his head slowly, "Nothing? Not even stiff muscles?"

"No?"

Bad stared at the bite in confusion, "My venom...you..." Techno's eyes widened slightly, looking surprised and a mix of panicked and nervous. He took a breath before huffing softly, "I must be immune then..."

"Im...mune..." The siren pronounced the words like they were foreign to him. His green eyes remained fixed on Techno, a slew of thoughts running through his head. The large man finished bandaging the bite and met Bad's eyes curiously, and quickly the siren looked away as his face reddened.

'Peculiar...' Techno thought, before standing up and walking over, "How about you? Anything

hurt?"

"J...just my back and shoulders."

"Figured. Sappnap stitched your wounds closed and I dressed them- You need to keep the dressing dry for two days and then we'll replace them, but if they get wet sooner than that we'll replace them sooner." He reached forward and Bad flinched back. Techno huffed, "Relax, I'm just checking your temperature,"

"I-i'm fine-" Bad instinctively leaned away as his face grew redder, yelping as Techno practically pinned him to the bed. He pressed the back of his hand to the siren's forehead- face less than a foot away as his eyebrows knitted together in confusion, "Do you have a fever? Your face is very-"

He felt someone grab the back of his collar and was quickly yanked back, "That's enough!" Techno swatted the hand off of him, turning to glare at the owner of the hand. Dream glared right back, jaw clenched in annoyance as he crossed his arms. Unwilling to back down, Techno glared harder, "What is with you?!"

"Ever heard of personal space? Because you're severely disregarding Bad's."

"I was just checking if he was sick-"

"Really? Didn't look like that." Techno felt his temper flare at Dream's accusation, "You-!"

"Dream, stop." Bad spoke up from beside them, face still slightly reddened still as his eyes fixed on the fairy, "Techno wasn't doing anything, so stop getting on his case all the time..." Dream looked subtly surprised, feeling his face warm behind his mask, "I..." He huffed softly and Bad crossed his arms, "Dream..." He trailed, "Apologize."

The blonde pressed his lips in a line, biting the inside of his cheek as Bad fixed his glare on him, "Dream."

"Fine!" He threw his hands in the air in frustration, "I'm sorry. There, happy?" He snapped. Bad smiled, "Very~ Now, why are you here?"

"Just...came to check and see if you're okay."

"Why wouldn't I be?"

Silence came from the blonde, and if Bad already knew his answer he didn't let on, "Well, I'm clearly fine." He chirped and Dream nodded slowly, "Right...I'll get going then." Bad hummed and Techno made no move, huffing softly. Slowly, he backed out the room, grumbling quietly as he shut the door and sighed. He leaned back against the wall, a hand threading through his hair. Bad was right, he was getting on Techno's back too often for no reason. Sure, he had the right to be concerned- but no right to be so hostile about it. Accusing Techno of something like *that* so quickly when he knew full well the war god was nothing like that.

"I'm sorry about that..." He heard Bad through the door, "I don't know why he's so out to get you..."

"It's fine- just...our last time seeing each other wasn't the greatest."

'That's an understatement...' Dream thought bitterly.

*"Why?! Why lie to me?! Why keep **this** from me?!"*

"Because I knew you would react like this, Chelem." The flat tone of his voice infuriated the fairy, angry tears spilling down his cheeks, "I fucking trusted you!! I thought you- we-" He choked on his words, a frustrated scream leaving him, "Sixteen years, Devlin! Sixteen goddamn years you keep this shit from me, and you never once think that i'd appreciate hearing it from you rather than finding it out by spying on you?!"

"Chelem-"

"All this time, I thought we were open and honest to each other! All this time-" He hit the table, the wood splintering and cracking at the strength behind it, "I thought you loved me!!!" Dream spat, eyes narrowed with fury at the war god. Those were the only words that seemed to reach Techno's ears, flinching a bit as he reached out, "Chelem, please- I do and I'm sorry-"

"Like hell!" Dream tore away from Techno's touch, teeth clenched in fury, "I could have forgiven this if you had just fucking told me yourself, but not like this!" He grabbed the ring on his finger,

*tearing it off and throwing the ring at Techno, "First light tomorrow, I'm **leaving** ! Don't you dare follow me, because we are through!!" He snapped. The ring fell to the floorboards, and Techno simply stood there with a blank expression.*

As Dream shoved past him, he didn't move.

Ten seconds. Ten seconds where Techno could have done anything to stop him. Ten seconds before the door slammed shut and signaled the finalization of Dream's words.

Dream shook his head, silent as he took deep breaths. That was so long ago, and he needed to let go. Whatever happened between them was in the past, and he had more to worry about than how much time Techno was spending with Bad or how close they were. He had someone else- someone he loved and loved him.

Pushing off the wall, he walked back down the hall and climbed above deck, heading to his quarters. Now out of the storm, the sky was a lovely blue and the sun's heat beat down on him, the waves under the ship allowing it to rock more gently.

As he opened the door, he heard Sappnap's voice.

"...Definitely navy locks."

"Can we get them off now?" Sappnap tiskied, "Nope. Sorry to say, but we are definitely gonna have to wait till docking," He let go of Ant's wrist, the hybrid quickly pulling his hand to his chest- the metal clinking a bit. Sappnap cringed at the sight, "We don't have anything on board the ship to do so safely, and he's so thin right now that his bones might be quite fragile- in short term: we can't risk it without injuring him."

"Damn..."

"Lucky for us, the next place we're stopping has a good blacksmith." Dream spoke up. Sam perked up, smiling brightly at the other man, "Ah- you're the captain?" The blonde nodded, eyeing the discarded navy suit top, "What are your names?" Sam followed his eyes and grew nervous, "Samuel Baris," He stated before gesturing to the cat hybrid, "This is Ant."

"Hm. Nice to meet you two..." He nodded towards the outfit, "Let's get this straight-"

"No, I don't support the Navy. It's just all I knew how to do as a living..."

"Oh?"

"And no. I don't want to go back and neither does my son." Dream paused, "Your...son?" Sam nodded and Dream looked at Sapnap. The noirette shrugged, "You heard the man. His son." He could tell Sapnap was holding back a laugh, biting the inside of his cheek. The blonde blinked a few times before sighing, pinching the bridge of his nose, "Alright. Alright- well that's uh...good to know." Walking over to the table, he picked up a stencil and turned to a map on the wall.

Carefully, he traced a course.

"First stop is to Anadell. A few days and nights on land- if we're lucky, we'll get there in time for the yearly festival. After that, it's past mermaid territory- remember Sapnap,"

"Past, not in! I know!" Sapnap shouted, looking unamused as his face went red, "You don't need to remind me every time..." He grumbled lowly, his face in his hands. Dream snickered, "Right. Past mermaid territory, away from the Harpy nesting islands, and to Darinsyth. If everything goes according to plan..." He lightly charted the path on the map, "Than that should put us at Myschyium for the Championship in three weeks. Plenty of time to sign up and practice!"

"Myschyium?" A small voice spoke up, and Dream turned to see Ant looking at him with awe, "Your signing up for the Championship in Myschyium?" The blonde grinned proudly, "Yes, actually. The only issue is we still need a fourth person. It's only George, Sapnap, and Me- but we need four-"

"We're hoping to find a fourth person in one of our stops!" Sapnap butt in with a large, excited smile. Dream nudged him with amusement, "We're hoping to win the prize too, but it's mostly for fun."

"Woah..."

Dream turned back to the map before pausing, looking back at Ant, "Say...you know how to navigate?" The hybrid smiled widely, looking the happiest he'd been since he'd gotten there, "Yes!"

"C'mere. Wanna help me chart this out then?" Ant practically bounced out of his seat, a loud laugh coming from Sam. The chains around his wrists and ankles scratched on the floorboards as he

bounded over, stopping just in front of Dream. The fairy couldn't contain a fond smile at the cute sight, handing him the pencil.

"Tell me, from Myschyium- what is the best route to Cheratium?"

In seconds, Ant was at the map tracing alternative paths, and silently, Dream found himself growing fonder of the hybrid.

Chapter End Notes

"The Golden Goat" is a reference to my friend Percy's Hermitcraft Pirate AU, and yes this exists in that same universe(if that wasn't obvious, lol.)

Heliotrope, White Camellia, Spring Crocus, & Rhododendron

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Credits to my beta-reader: His tumblr is [architech3702](#) and his ao3 is

[IanLovesFanfiction](#) <3.

Tumblr: [fantasticalbee](#)

Edit as of 12/11/2020: Link to "Dread" by Melon Wing and Percy's hermitcraft pirate AU(Both on Tumblr) is now in the end notes! (Go check her out, Melon's an amazing writer and Percy is a fantastic artist. A lot better than me.)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George narrowed his eyes as he tried to recall what Maia taught him, carefully piercing the cloth with the pointed needle and pulling the thread slowly through. When the knot caught, he repeated the action downwards into a small X. He sat in the cool shade of the sails, a slight breeze helping him cool down in the muggy heat. The sun was setting, hues of orange, red, and pink painting the sky with the deep blues and blacks of night slowly taking and right now was uneventful, a rare point where the crew could relax a bit as they sailed smoothly.

Cross-stitching was something he picked up when he first met Maia. Back then, they weren't engaged- at least they didn't *know* they were. Both of them had thought their parents were just negotiating trade deals- oh how naive they were...

George was never allowed to partake in what his parents considered strictly "feminine" activities. So when after thirty minutes of watching in intrigue Maia suddenly offered to teach him, he was ecstatic. There was something oh-so relaxing about it- the patterns mesmerizing and lovely, the rhythm and repetition of each stitch relaxing. Even back when he couldn't tell apart the colors of the threads he used that well, it was therapeutic. His only escape in a world of closed minds and suffocating duties. With every stitch, his mind drifted somewhere else.

"Ah- don't pull your needle too tight now-! You're almost done, don't get too rushed or eager-" Maia's hands stopped him, her hands much softer and thin fingers much fitter for the task. George let the string have more slack, biting his lip as he focused, "There- just like that! See, you're a natural!" She giggled, a proud smile creeping across George's face as he put in the final few stitches. He admired it- as messily made as it was. He held his hard work gingerly, looking at Maia with bright eyes. The princess seemed just as excited as him. She wasn't particularly into cross-stitching herself- she only knew as much as she did because her father said it was a "necessary skill for a young woman."

Both of them thought that was stupid.

"Alright- your turn!" George got up, grabbing her hand to pull her along, "Huh? Where are we-"

"You said you wanted to learn how to swordfight, right? Well, consider this a thank you!" The young prince looked around before he spotted the older man, smiling, "Baltina!"

The Guard turned to him curiously before walking over, "What is it you need, sire?"

"The keys to the training hall- may I borrow them?"

Baltina faltered, "Ah...sire- I can't just-"

"I won't tell my parents if you don't. I only want to grab two rapiers and then I'll give the keys right back." Baltina seemed to consider it, but one look at the two joyful eighteen-year-old royals and he gave in. He unlatched the key's from his belt and handed them over with a wink, "If anybody asks, you stole them off me- capiche?" Behind George, Maia gave a soft, excited squeal. The prince nodded, "You're the best! Thank you-!" Without another word, he ran past the guard and Maia followed close behind, rushing to the training hall.

"George, look!"

The brunette jumped at his boyfriend's voice, hearing it loud and clear over the gentle waves. He turned his attention to the other male, looking to see Dream leaning over the rail and looking overboard in astonishment, "Look! Look look look!!" He cried excitedly, surprisingly child-like as a massive grin was on his face. Deciding to humor him, he stood up and walked over, "What?"

Dream gestured to the water and George looked down. Confusion filled him as he didn't see anything, opening his mouth to say something only to shut it with a yelp as a creature breached the surface.

The sleek light grayish-blue skin was immediately recognizable and there was loud squeaking and clicking as more of the creatures swam and hopped over the small waves beside the boat. The brunette grinned, tilting his head as he looked at the ecstatic fairy, "You're excited about Dolphins?"

"You aren't?!"

"Well they aren't exactly rare..."

Dream seemed to falter a bit, face growing red, "Ah...that's not-" He shook his head, smile weakened, "Never mind, I'm just being stupid..."

"Hey- no, Dream you're doing that thing again."

"What? What thing?" George crossed his arms, lips pressed in a line, "That thing where you get all quiet and don't talk about something because it's past-you related." Dream blinked in confusion, "I do that?"

"Yes? You haven't noticed?"

"No?"

George rolled his eyes, "Well, you do." He nudged him gently, "Now, spill." Dream snorted, looking away, "It's stupid..."

"Dream..." The brunette whined, leaning his head on the other's arm. Dream's eyes flickered back to the dolphins, still swimming beside the ship. He side-eyed George- who was making a frankly poor attempt at giving him puppy eyes- and gave a soft wheeze, giving in, "Pffftt- Fine! Fine!"

The brunette gave a victorious, bright grin, "Yes!"

"Don't get too excited- it's not all that exciting."

"Getting you to talk about past stuff is always worth celebration Mr. lips sealed." Dream huffed, reaching and digging in his pocket. His fingers brushed the cool metal and he grabbed it, gingerly pulling out a necklace made of gold and silver. It looked incredibly expensive, and George gawked at it for a minute- surprise etched in his face. It looked like something his mother or his aunt would have worn, and for a moment he wondered if it was something that Dream had stolen. The blonde brought it up carefully, laying the circular pendant in his palm. Being as thick as a pocket watch, the initials C and F were engraved on the front with a dolphin and a butterfly. He looked at George and laughed quietly at his expression, "Don't look too shocked, this isn't the best part."

He took a few steps back from the rail and pressed a small trigger on the bottom. The front popped open, and the scent of warm apple pie hit George. A soft melody twinkled in the air, somehow sounding like it was directly by his ear despite being a bit away from him. Dream's eyes remained on the sunset, watching the sky darken further before slowly opening it further. On the inside, there was a thin pane of glass showing off the inner mechanics of the music box. He shut his eyes, recalling the enchantment as if he'd just heard it.

"Cetacea, Delphinus delphis."

There was a click and the pendent was engulfed in a purplish sheen. As the last few remnants of sunset fell under the waters, there was a flicker before a ball of white light rose from the pendent. George's eyes followed the light as it rose into the air and he jumped as it stopped and it exploded into sparkles. He shivered as the unfamiliar staticy feeling of magic in the air pricked at his skin and watched as the sparkles slowly reformed to make shapes.

The twinkling melody changed to something reminiscent of the Waltz, and he realized that the sparkles were forming into the shape of dolphins and other fish. His eyes wide with astonishment, he gasped as the shapes began to move. The mimicked dolphins swam through the air around them, playing and even coming closer.

Dream watched with a ginger smile, setting down the open pendant on top of a nearby barrel. A feeling of nostalgia hit him as the scent of rosemary and honey flooded his senses.

"Ready?"

"Yes!!"

"Open~"

The hands covering his eyes pulled back and he looked at the younger fairy in confusion before spotting the pendant in her hands. Her smile was wide, a childish sparkle in her eyes that only he knew of, "Happy hundred years, Che-che!"

He tilted his head and slowly took the pendant, fingers tracing his initials and the designs on the front, "Thank you?" He laughed with slight confusion, and she rolled her eyes, "There's a button on the bottom. Click it." She stated plainly. Dream gave a soft 'oh' before looking for the button, clicking it.

It opened and he smelled sea-salt and mist, a melody he recognized as "The song of the sea" twinkling in his ears. Flipping it open, magic rose from the pendant, and shapes formed. He watched with wonder as Dolphins and fish swam through the air, heart warming at the display. Dolphins were always something Dream had been in love with. They were a creature from the world outside the kingdom- a creature from the world that was forbidden for him to go to. He was fascinated by what he read about them- how they'd communicate, functioned...

How they seemed so free in the endless expanse of an ocean.

He threw his arms around the younger fairy, grinning from ear to ear, "Thank you!!" She laughed and hugged back tightly, "Your welcome, Chelem."

"Dream?" He felt a hand on his face and looked down to see George staring up at him, "Huh?"

The brunette smiled weakly, hesitantly reaching to cup his jaw, "You're crying..." He touched his face in surprise, feeling the cool tear trail on his cheek.

'And to think...I thought I'd shed all the tears I had for that part of my life...'

"Dre?" The fairy leaned into his hand and placed his own on top of it, lips curling into a small smile, "This time, the tears are good. I just remembered something nice for once..." A relieved smile appeared on George's face, sighing softly, "That's a nice change."

Dream pulled him closer, George's hand slipping from his cheek and interlacing their fingers as he pressed a soft kiss to his forehead, "Yea..." He felt George lean into him, head buried in his chest as he rested his chin on his head, eyes watching the mimic dolphins dance across the clear, starry night sky.

At that moment, it felt like they were the only two people in the world. The only sounds were their own heartbeats, the gentle sloshing of the waves under the quietly creaking boats, and the quiet melody from the pendant. To them, it felt like they were holding their entire worlds in each other's arms- the only things that were important at that moment were each other. Here and now.

And deep down, Dream could only hope it would remain that way.

=x=

As Finn finished the story, Vurb was in near tears.

"Buh- wah- No!" He whined, "That can't be the end already!!"

Finn laughed, wheezing. He always adored people's reactions to hearing the tale of "Dread", the fabled story of how the ruthless, legendary pirate Captain Docm77 and an Orphaned Navy soldier named Grian fell in love. He had no idea if the story was *true*, per say- the only thing he knew was that after many run in's and bumps in the road, Doc and Grian had somehow fallen in love. An enemies to lovers thing, he guessed.

"W-what about the others?!" A lightbulb lit up about his head and he suddenly cried out, "What about Mim and Etho?! Scar and Cub?! Ren, Mumbo, and Iskall?!" He flailed his arms dramatically with a loud gasp, "False and Stress?!?" Finn tried his hardest to hold in his laughter. However...

"Finn. What happened to the lesbian pirate and princess, Finn. Please tell me they found happiness, please-" Vurb gave him the most serious look and Finn fell back onto the sheets in peels of laughter, unable to stop himself as he clutched his stomach.

"FINN!!!"

He wheezed, eyes tearing up from laughter, "Oh my Amu stop- stop holy shit I feel like my dy-" he wheezed, "-ing!!"

Vurb pouted and shut up, waiting for Finn to recover. As the other male sat up, he wiped his tears from his eyes, "H-holy fuck that- that is the best reaction I've ever gotten I- fuck-" He giggled, his long hair undone and a mess.

Seeing the big smile, Vurb's stomach fluttered. Like everything else about Finn, it was so flawlessly pretty.

There was soft thumping against the mattress and Finn looked behind him, snorting, "Well someones happy."

Vurb looked back and flushed, seeing his tail wagging behind him. He gave a sheepish smile and Finn smiled more gently this time, "And, to answer your question- the only other story I know of is

Etho and Mims, but..." He trailed off before looking at the clock. It read seven pm, and if he remembered correctly...

"It's thirty minutes past ship curfew for 'Passengers'" He made air-quotes, rolling his eyes, "And since you and I aren't soldiers, you gotta head to your room."

"I can't just sleep here?"

Finn raised a brow, a small smirk playing on his lips as he lidded his eyes, "Coming on a bit strong there, huh puppy?" It took a minute for Vurb to process, head tilted in confusion- but as soon as he did, his eyes were as wide as saucers and his face lit up like a tomato, "That- I-" he choked on his words, "T-that's not what I- Y-y'know what- yea I- I better leave-" He scrambled off the bed, laughing nervously, "Have uh- Have a good night-" He quickly exited, leaving Finn alone with a soft, small love-struck smile, "That one is something else..."

There was a soft noise and he looked- seeing the boy from earlier poking his head out from the closet, "It's clear, you can come out." He spoke much more gently now, getting up from the bed and going to the desk. He rummaged around as the boy came out, and he pulled out a chalkboard and chalk, "Here we go-"

Finn looked to see the boy sitting on the bed and walked over, sitting beside him. He placed the items in his lap with a smile, "I just want you to answer a few questions for me, okay?"

The boy nodded.

"Good- then let us begin."

=x=

As Schlatt harnessed the large stallion, he patted his back softly. It had been a long time since he'd gone on a journey, but the old boy was spritely and ready. Cap's mare neighed softly as he checked over the saddle, making sure it wasn't hurting his steed. Tubbo talked to the older man excitedly, and Cap responded with patience and a more tame version of Tubbo's excitement.

Tommy fidgetted uncomfortably in the heavy coat while Tubbo seemed completely content despite it being twice his size. The two of them had slept through the entire day before Schlatt had woken them at sundown- saying they'd be leaving under the cover of nightfall. Apparently, Cap was heading the same direction as them and knew the lay of the land better, so it was determined he'd be traveling with them as well. It was a safer bet, and he seemed nice enough- plus he'd saved

Tubbo and returned him safe and sound just like he promised, so Tommy trusted him a bit. They were just at the outskirts of town by the stables, the night sky about them and the crisp autumn breeze gentle. He stared down the dirt road that led out of town, anxiety settling deep in his stomach.

This was it.

They were leaving.

They were leaving the place he and Tubbo had grown up in for most of their life, and in an odd way...Tommy felt they were going to miss it. They were going to miss the familiarity of somewhere they called home...

Oh, who was Tommy kidding? This place was more-so Tubbo's home than it was his. Tommy's birthplace was far from here, and where he chose his home was by Tubbo's side. Regardless, a small part of him would miss it all.

Just a *small* part, though.

"Hey, Kid?" Schlatt put a hand on his shoulder, squeezing gently. Tommy made a noise acknowledgment. The older man took a deep breath, searching his mind for the right words. He always thought of himself as terrible with people a lot younger than him- hell, he was terrible with people in general. His humor was too crass to most, and a lot of the time he seemed to come across as cold.

In other words, he was trying to figure out how to not sound like an absolute dick with what he was going to say.

"Tommy, I know this is big for you and Tubbo. You're sixteen- young and...

I know you feel invincible, but you're not.

You feel invincible together. But trust me, you're not. I know you feel like you both are going to take the world by storm- that you're going to make an earth-shattering impact..."

"This isn't about making a shitty impact." Tommy butted in, "This is about finding out what this compass and the dreams i've been having mean. This is about me and Tubbo going on the adventure of a lifetime and getting answers along the way."

"Tommy. Just listen for a second-"

"I don't-"

Schlatt raised his voice, "I want to set some ground rules." his voice was snappy and sharp-catching Tommy off-guard, "First off, don't go running off without at the least letting me know. I know you think you're a grown adult who can take care of yourself- but you're not. You are sixteen years old, can barely hold a sword- if you and Tubbo were to run into a real monster out there, you'd be dead in seconds."

Tommy wanted to argue. Wanted to bring up the fact that he *could* fight- he'd gotten into a lot of fights with other kids before, hell he'd even won almost all of those fights.

But...

Honestly, he doubted he could last long against a real monster. Not that he'd admit it.

"Secondly, if I tell you to shut your ass up- for fucksake it's for your own good. I have an attitude and a bad mouth too, I understand- but something it's better to shut it and keep your head low, and I've *seen* you on the docks before kid. Remember that one time you got into a fight with that Navy officer?" Tommy cringed at the memory, but listened anyway. The way Schlatt was talking now was a lot more mature and crude than when he started, but it got his attention, "Yea. I saw that. You didn't hold your tongue for one and then to make it worse you fucking *decked* the guy. And tell me, what did you get to remind you of that?"

Tommy bit his lip, the memory of the whip hitting him making the single scar across his back burn a bit. It had only taken one lash to have him on the ground in agony and suddenly bystanders no longer became bystanders. Even more people got involved when the guy tried to hit him again and Tubbo grabbed the guys arm to stop him only to get elbowed in the face. They were only fourteen at that time, and besides, "The asshole deserved it, I get it. I know what happened. But just- learn to pick your battles kid, because running head-first into every battle that comes your way? It'll get you killed. Third, and last for all...do you see this book?" He held up a large, thick book with an iron clasp holding it shut- as if it's contents were important. Tommy nodded.

"Don't you even think for a single second about stealing this and reading it, got it kid? This is my

personal bestiary. Personal. Are we clear?"

'No.' Tommy thought.

"Yes sir..."

They were not clear.

"Good. Glad we had this talk."

As Schlatt walked back to the wagon, Tommy eye'd the book in his hand.

He was *so* reading that book.

=x=

The god stroked the face of the statue, it's features eternally frozen in agony. He found it amusing- it was such a silly face. All the statues were- all the victims of the mortal then stood before him. Silent. Waiting. Calm.

The man was born with the curse- having a mother who was a type of halfling and a mortal father. Yet despite his curse, he made his way and life and found a way to subdue his...affinity. Tame his lethal gaze. He had family. He took care of orphaned hybrids. Misfortunates like himself.

He was good.

Despite being a creature of malevolence and death...he had managed to make himself *good* .

And it disgusted Keralis. The kindness that radiated off him was pure in form despite his placid look. He had summoned Keralis for one reason alone- to beg for his help and stop the death of the children he looked after. They were all sick- one of them having caught a fatal illness and now all of them had it.

He said he'd give him anything he wanted- even his own soul.

But...Keralis wasn't interested in his soul. It was weak and mortal- and, well, mortal souls were more of Amusix's trade. However...

The man shivered as the god of the underworlds multiple eyes narrowed at him, a shark-toothed smile playing across his lips, "Anything, hm?"

"Yes..."

A sharp claw tapped his lips, as if thinking- and then he chuckled, "Five hundred and sixty-four days."

"What? What do you mean?"

He laughed and it was disturbingly soft and gentle for his menacing appearance, "Sweetheart, what I mean is that *that* is how long you have to get the soul of a kitsune and bring it to me~" He purred.

"A...kitsune?"

"Mhm~"

He faltered, slight confusion still evident and the god sighed in frustration. He crooked a finger towards the man and he slowly crept closer.

"A year and a half, angel-face." He put a single finger on the man's head, and visions flashed before his eyes.

He saw a forest. A small fox sped by his feet before disappearing behind a tree. What walked out from behind the tree was a man with a foxtail and ears. He had blue eyes and red hair and the grin on the lips was mischievous as he darted back into the bushes and changed again.

Then, it was gone.

"That is a kitsune. I want you to find that kitsune, and I want you to bring me his soul."

"His...soul?"

"Mhmmm~ A kitsune soul is a round jewel-like thing they carry around- you'll know it when you see it. Now..." He hummed, chuckling lowly, "Do we have a deal?"

It took only a few seconds, but sooner determination was steeled on the man's face.

"Deal."

And thus, another begins their journey.

Chapter End Notes

"Dread" is by melonwing on tumblr and it is based off of our friend Percy's Hermitcraft Pirate AU! Go check it out it's an amazing story that is the same universe as this is and Melon's writing it just- so good. I highly recommend it. Same with Percy's art skills she is just fantastic.

Link to Percy's Tumblr (Where you can see all her gorgeous art for the Hermitcraft part of this AU) - <https://gridoc.tumblr.com/>

Link to Melon's tumblr - <https://melon-wing.tumblr.com/>

Melonwings master list of Hermitcraft pirate AU fic's - <https://melon-wing.tumblr.com/post/619377035095195648/pirate-au-masterlist>

Link to "Dread" - <https://melon-wing.tumblr.com/post/614576644356816896/dread>

Ferns & Iris

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See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Dock's up ahead!!"

"Fuck yes, finally-"

"Language!"

The hot sun beat over head as the crew ran around the deck, getting in positions, "Sapnap, wind speed and direction!"

"Weak and straight ahead!"

George and Sam helped position the sails to have one part giving reversing power and the other giving forward power. As soon as they did, the ship began to slightly bob forwards and backward, 'Like a falling leaf...' Dream mused, only briefly letting go of the steering wheel to quickly fasten his mask over his face. He regripped the wheel- the old wood familiar against his palms- and he felt at peace. He felt at most control when at sea- though he knew when it came to the waters he was far from in control.

Dream was a creature of the sky by birthright- meant to soar with the emerald butterfly wings he'd been born with. He remembers those days- those where he'd spend hours and hours soaring in the skies with the wind in his hair, free as a bird as he'd learn through trial and error the extent of his abilities. Back then, he was young and utterly fearless with fiery determination- going against his parents no matter how much they scolded and reprimanded his behavior as unfitting for someone of his status.

Rolling his shoulders, he feels the faint and barely used wing muscles flutter a bit. When he was

exiled and his wings were cut from him, he had to learn how humans coped with being wingless. He was determined to be just as good on his two feet as he was with his wings, and when he learned how to sail it became just like flying to him. The sails felt like his new wings, helping him to fly to distant lands with the added benefit of letting him carry the people he loved with him too.

He watched as Techno released the anchor, helping to slow them down. The ship glided into the harbor, slowing to a stop just off from the dock and putting down the bridge. Dream let go of the steering wheel with a soft, satisfied smile before hopping over the rails. After lowering the sails and making sure they were safe to leave the boat, the crew gathered on deck and Dream spoke up.

"Alright, here's what's going to happen. Ant, you're coming with me to get those shackles off and tomorrow you'll go with me and Bad for new clothes," He saw visible discomfort from both Sam and Ant, who clung to the older man's arm, "Sam, you can come with us too if you'd like."

Just like that, the two relaxed and brightened again.

"Sapnap, George, Bad- go to the market, check prices and write them down so we can work on resupply later. If i'm correct, it should be the second day of the harvest festival! So when you guys are done, you three get 3 gold pieces each to spend at your leisure if you see something you like." Dream paused, looking at Techno. The man had a placid look, and just before he said anything Dream glanced to see Bad watching with his lips pressed in a thin line. He quickly bit his own tongue and huffed, "Techno you can either go with the other three or stay on the ship. Just- don't cause any trouble."

He saw Bad's expression brighten, green eyes lighting up. Dream looked him over, silently appreciating Techno's handiwork with the bandages. They were barely noticeable and Bad looked comfortable in them- which was important considering how sensitive human mermaid skin was. The price of its softness was how easily irritable and high maintenance it was, and nobody on the ship knew what ointments were right for Bad if he got a rash or a blister.

Techno looked at the siren and Dream felt a pang as he saw a glint of fondness in the war god's eyes and a tiny smile tugging at his lips. He watched as Techno easily walked over to the three, and shook his head as he walked over to Sam and Ant.

"Since there are four of us, should we split in pairs to get more done?"

"Sounds good."

"I'm fine with it!"

The group of four split up, agreeing on different sides of town. Sapnap and George went to the east for more food-related stock while Bad and Techno split to the west for material related stocks. The day went by without much fuss, and by afternoon they finished their tasks. George and Sapnap split from each other, and it wasn't long before the noirette found himself wandering around the festival. He passed all sorts of game and food stands with a calm smile, simply enjoying the sights of delicacies, beautifully made baked goods, excited children running around, and upbeat music coming from the square.

The air smelled like heaven- baked bread, steaks, cooked fish, and more. He fiddled with the gold coins in his pocket, humming and glancing around for something that caught his eye.

A stall sat with a younger man making something- seemingly moving with the festival music as he worked. Multi-colored crystal type things were laid out on the table, a mist of transparent white fog around the crystals that Sapnap could only recognize as a cooling spell.

Well, it certainly caught his attention, didn't it?

Walking over, he casually rapt his knuckles on the wood and the person jumped a bit, calling "Just a minute!" over his shoulder. Sapnap opened his mouth to speak, only to be cut short when the man turned to him. The man had fluffed, curly light brown hair and mismatched orange and purple eyes. Their eyes met and he looked surprised for a moment as his eyes reverted to a deep brown before a bright, infectious smile spread across his face, "Woah, haven't seen you around town before- which is weird considering I know almost everybody-" He giggled and Sapnap found himself speechless, gawking as his heart leapt into his throat. The other man tilted his head after a second, smile faltering at Sappnaps silence, "Ah...sir? Are you alright?"

The noirette blinked quickly, shaking his head as warmth flooded to his cheeks. He finally found his voice as he choked out, "Y-yea! Just- I'm just fine-" The man laughed softly, "Okay? What can I do for you, then?"

Taking a deep breath, Sapnap took a second to sort himself before speaking again, "Well I was curious about uh...what you're selling."

The man perked up, "Oh! It's rock candy, ever tried it?"

"No?"

There was a sharp gasp, as if he had committed an offense, "You've never had- No, give me a second this is unacceptable!" Quickly he grabbed a slew of ingredients, his eyes turning a glowing purple and orange as magic hummed through the air. It sent shivers through him, and as Sapnap looked around, tension leaving his shoulders as he realized nobody seemed to pay the magic act

any mind. In fact, a few passersby stopped to watch with fascination, and Sapnap smiled. A town that was friendly to magic-users was a breath of fresh air, and it made him feel more at-ease. The man's fingers worked fast, ingredients pouring and levitating as he worked, "If you have a sweet tooth, you are gonna love this!" He sang, the materials mixing and crystalizing over a thin stick of wood. When he finished, he grabbed the stick and handed it to Sapnap with excitement, "Here you are!"

Sapnap eyed it curiously, looking between the man and the candy. He carefully bit off a piece, the sweet taste invading his senses, "Oh wow...It's really good!"

"I know right!" He laughed.

He took another bite, and this time he winced. His stomach twisted and growled, and he took a deep breath. His smile dropped and he shivered, slight hunger churning in his stomach. Sighing, he tried to relax and looked at the younger man.

"What's your name?"

"Hm? Oh! I'm Karl!" A sly smirk played on Sapnap's face, eyes going lidded as he leaned forward, "Karl...I like it~" His tone was a purr as he slid his hand over the brunettes. Karl's cheeks flushed pink, looking surprised as he stilled and his eyes locked onto Sapnap. The noirettes eyes held a gentle fire in them, a swirl of orange filling his iris' before ending with his pupils turning catlike with a flash of a red heart, "My name is Sapnap..." His voice lowered to a husky whisper, a soft echo in Karl's mind as his focus was completely taken by the older man, "You're pretty cute, so what do you say we get out of here?~" Confidence swelled in Sapnap's chest as well as shame. He knew it wasn't his fault for being unable to control his urges, but it didn't make using his lure feel any better.

Karl stared, red-faced with an awestruck expression...before pulling away with a flustered, uncomfortable laugh, "W-woah- a bit forward there, huh? At least take me dancing first, geez!"

Sapnap froze in shock, his eyes fading into their normal black as he stared. The brunette fiddled with the buttons of his shirt nervously, "I-i mean- Don't get me wrong, you're really *really* handsome and all. The rugged pirate look suits you well and uh...you seem great but I don't- Well-" As he rambled, Sapnap mentally slapped himself. Had he read him wrong? How had his lure not worked- genetically, due to his mother's status, his lure was stronger than a normal Incubi's- so it was very strange that even without a visible charm, he so easily was brushed off.

His smirk turned into a genuine smile, something in his stomach fluttering, "Then how about that." He butted in, voice much more gentle as he leaned back. Karl stopped, looking at him with surprise, "About that?" He choked, giggling at his mess up slightly, "I mean- About what?"

Sapnap's heart did a flip, 'Gods- I swear to Xisuma, could this boy get any cuter?' he thought.

"You and me, tomorrow. I'm sorry about coming on so strong like that- it's a bad habit of mine."
He made it a point to put a more comfortable distance between them, sighing in relief at the tension in the brunette's shoulders easing, "I'd like to take you dancing, if you'll give me the chance?"

The younger's eyes lit up at that, "You- you actually want to take me dancing?"

"Yea?"

"With...no strings attached?"

"If by that you mean asking you to sleep with me after, then yes. No strings attached, I promise."

His heart was thudding in his chest as Karl was silent, his confidence faltering as the younger man looked between Sapnap, the rock candies, and down the street, "Well...i'm supposed to work tomorrow but..." He chewed at his bottom lip, looking heavily conflicted. His eyes flickered and met Sapnap's again, and a single thought passed through his mind.

In seconds, that same infectious grin spread across his lips as he gave in, "You know what? I work twenty-four seven for my boss without a single complaint. I'm sure he wouldn't mind me taking an afternoon off if I ask."

The noirette pushed down a cheer of excitement that nearly escaped him, trying to keep a cool head, "Great- so it's a date?"

Karl swallowed an ecstatic, flustered giggle, "Yea- Yea it's a date."

"Fantastic." Without another word, Sapnap took a gold coin from his pocket and put it on the tabletop, grabbing a few of the rock candies with a wink, "See you cutie!" He turned, walking away and slipping back into the crowd.

Karl stared at the coin with surprise, eyes wide as he looked between Sapnap and the coin, "Bye?!" He called after in shock, laughing as he picked up the coin and kissed it- jumping up and down in excitement.

The noirette turned a corner, finally out of sight before he cheered. Looking around frantically, he spotted George at one of the stands and ran over, a yelp of surprise coming from the brunette as he

was spun around, "I have a date!!" He yelled excitedly.

"Congrats? I mean- people usually throw themselves at you so i'm not surprised..." George replied in confusion, before Sapnap shoved a rock candy into his hand and bit into his own. The prince felt a smile creeping across his lips too, soft laughter bubbling from his chest. He'd never seen Sapnap so excited about something, and it was a sight to see the younger man with a dopey, love-struck smile while bouncing like an ecstatic child, "No- you don't understand- George, he *didn't* do that! He was flustered, but I was just a normal person to him! I-" Sapnap choked on his words, unable to stop his thudding heart as happy tears pricked at his eyes, "He- He's not- My lure didn't-" George put a hand on his arm, tugging him away as his smile softened, "Take your time and breathe. Okay?"

Sapnap swallowed thickly, the sweet taste of the rock candy still on his tongue and reminding him of the flustered stall vendor. He took a deep breath of air, trying to calm down as his voice softened, "My lure. I tried it on him, and it didn't work. Do you know what that means?" George shook his head and the noirette blinked away tears, voice growing hushed, "It- it means that I have a chance at a relationship that isn't driven by sexual appeal, George. Love. Real, human love..." His voice was laced with disbelief and joy. George almost melted at the hope in his eyes,

"Sap..."

"I have a shot, and I...I don't want to mess that up."

The prince's smile widened, "I have a strong feeling you won't."

=x=

Looking up from his carving, Schlatt watched as Tommy made a face of discomfort while gripping his stomach. He tsked, rolling his eyes. Didn't these kids know they could just ask if they were hungry?

Pausing, he milled over that thought before retracting it. 'Of course they don't...' he thought, 'Can't imagine they were allowed to just ask for much at just any time before...Guess i'm gonna have to fix that shit, huh.'

"Hey," Tommy and Tubbo both went quiet and looked at him, "You guys hungry?" He questioned. Schlatt tried to keep his tone light and a bit jovial instead of snappy and annoyed- he was bad with people, but he'd picked up enough over the years from Tommy to know that the golden blonde responded to annoyance, hostility, and anger with his own fiery temper and sharp tongue. He

responded well with more casual, softer, or firm and commanding tones.

The two exchanged a look before Tommy nodded. Without another word, Schlatt dug through the rations and grabbed a loaf of bread, breaking it in two pieces and tossing each piece to them.

There was a murmur of thanks before Tommy gnawed on a piece of stale bread, cringing a bit at the toughness. Thankfully though, he didn't complain and neither did Tubbo- who ate almost greedily. He was used to this type of food, and Schlatt was relieved- the last thing he needed was to hear the two orphans complaining about the rations. He'd only packed non-perishables, as they couldn't risk things that would spoil and make any of them sick.

Schlatt let his eyes shut, drifting off to sleep as he let himself get lost in his thoughts. Along the daylight hours was Cap's turn to navigate, so during the past two days, he'd been entertained by watching the two boys entertain themselves while he messed with a carving- having breaks to eat or sleep. Schlatt had learned peculiar things about them in that time- and it was easy to see how and why they were so close. The two were like two halves of one person- what one didn't know or couldn't do, the other did know and did. Tommy could read and had surprisingly good handwriting, but he couldn't do math for the life of him. Meanwhile, Tubbo could do math quickly and efficiently but struggled to read and wrote messily.

He had watched as the two laid out the velvet cape on the boards, almost laughing when he started to realize the cape was big enough to wrap entirely around the both of them.

In a gist, he found himself growing fond of the boys- try as he might to ignore them. He knew Cap had grown particularly fond of Tubbo- often seeing the man showing Tubbo various maps and more while giving little mini geography lessons. In just a few days and nights, they had created a function that worked- and it gave a little confidence to him that this wouldn't be so bad.

Tommy watched Schlatt, trying to figure out if he was asleep. The soft snoring and steady rise and fall of his chest clued him in, and quietly Tommy reached, opening the older man's satchel. It sat at his feet, and the iron clasp was tight and heavy while the leather was old and worn.

He slipped his hand in, grabbing the spine of the old, thick book. His heart thudded as he slowly pulled it out, watching Schlatt's face for any sign of him stirring before lifting the book into his arms.

He opened it slowly, careful not to let it make a loud noise.

Flipping through the pages, his eyes scanned the pages- looking for something specific.

'Ogres, Trolls, Nymphs, Sirens, Mermaids, Elves, Fae, Pixies- Harpies!!' He cheered internally,

smiling. He brushed off the page and flipped it, seeing sketches of harpies on the left along with a short few sentences about Harpies, and something looking to be like journal entries. With a last look to Schlatt's sleeping form, he began to read shaky, uneven writing.

Harpies are a form of malicious and vengeful humanoid avians. They all seem focused on invoking a sense of crooked justice- each for their own reasons from minor and petty to major and slightly reasonable. They're mostly solitary, and have a tendency to be very prideful. Some have respect towards others, but most do not.

-

I've met only a few, but the most peculiar one i've ever encountered has been one i've fought and who is keeping me locked away right now. The asshole was kind enough to provide me an inkwell, quill, and my book. I'll keep documenting my experiences with him, but right now I fear for my friends.

"Fear."

It's an odd feeling. I've never feared much in my life. Never been afraid of death. But the sudden separation from them has left me with a feeling I can only describe in a few common words; Fearful. Isolated. Alone.

He's given me a choice, but I am un-

Tommy jumped and quickly shoved the book back in the satchel when he heard Schlatt groan. The brunette shifted to lay on his side and Tommy held his breath- dammit, this was the worst place to do this. The road was too bumpy and too easy to wake Schlatt up. What choice? What friends was Schlatt talking about? He wanted to read more, but it was risky.

"Tommy?"

He attention pulled to Tubbo, who was attempting to read one of Cap's maps, "This says...Synbium, right?" Scooting over, he looked at what Tubbo was pointing to, "Close. Syndium." The younger's expression dropped, "Oh..."

Tommy softened, nudging Tubbo, "You were close enough! One letter off is all, and that's better than a bunch right?"

"I....guess..."

His mind was pulled from the book, and he tried to find a way to distract the younger boy as well, "Why don't you tell me facts about Bees?"

Instantly, Tubbo brightened again, "Can I?!"

"I'm all ears."

He began, "Bees sleep together in their hives and vibrate to create heat during winter!"

"Like the death ball's they make with enemies?"

"Kind of, yea!"

As Tubbo rambled, Tommy felt his head lightening. Relaxing, any thought of the book left his mind...

"Hello again, Tommy."

But the man with wings did not.

Chapter End Notes

Headlines: Local Asexual magic-using farmboy meets Incubus hybrid and their both flustered gay messes.

Begonia, Spearmint, Yellow Hyacinth & Willow's.

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Credits to my beta-reader: His tumblr is [architech3702](#) and his ao3 is [IanLovesFanfiction <3](#).

Tumblr: [fantasticalbee](#)

*Tommy's eyes snapped open, finding himself standing before the winged man once more.
"...You..."*

A large grin spread across the man's face, eyes sparkling with something as his wings fluffed up, "Me!!" He cheered, wings spreading out as if to express his excitement, "Are you ready for another game of riddles and answers, Tommy?" His tone was smoother, more confident but not overwhelmingly so. Tommy was taken aback by the question, the winged man's demeanor more playful now in nature, "That depends. Is my life still at stake?"

His eyes widened and he let out a chuckle, the sound light and warm, "Of course not!! Ah- we got off on the wrong foot, hm? I was in a bit of a mood that day but I assure you that's not my usual attitude."

"Something tells me that's a lie, but okay..." Tommy grew uncomfortable by the man's sudden friendliness. In his experience, people weren't just suddenly friendly without wanting something in return- but Tommy couldn't think of anything the harpy would want from him. It just felt...off.

"Now, ready for the first riddle? I've been thinking hard about these, so they might be a bit...challenging~" The last word triggered something in Tommy. A challenge? He liked challenges- they let him prove himself, "Tch, bring it. I could probably solve 'em in seconds!" A cocky smile spread across his face, arms folding across his chest. The man clapped, "Oh!! The confidence, I love it! Alright, here it is." He cleared his throat.

"I appear everywhere except the dark. What am I."

*Tommy rolled his eyes, **"That's so fucking easy!! The light!"***

The man hummed, his finger tapping his chin, "Hm...I suppose it was..." He shrugged, "Alright, your turn."

"First things first- what's your name? You know mine, but I don't know yours!" The man

straightened his back, smile turning sly as he made a flourish with his hand and bowed, “Wilbur Dempsey Soot.” Tommy snorted, “Dempsey? What kind of middle name is Dempsey?”

Wilbur scowled for a minute before smirking, “What kind of last name is Innit?”

The blonde paused, face reddening a bit as he realized the harpy had a point. He sputtered before huffing, “Next riddle...”

“Imagine you have one match. You walk into a dark room, and on the table there is an oil lamp, some newspaper, and some kindling wood...” He hummed, “You need a light source to get through the pitch black room, but cannot take the oil lamp. So, which would you light first, Tommy?”

Now that. That made the sixteen year-old think. Tommy paused, beginning to pace slowly as he thought, “The kindling wood can’t be carried while lit, and neither can the newspaper- i’d burn myself and end up dropping it- losing my damn light source...”

‘Think...what could I-’

It hit him.

“The match! I could just light the match-!” He turned to Wilbur, who hummed his affirmation, *“Ding ding ding~ Your turn again.”* Tommy celebrated internally, and in his distraction he took a few steps forward, *“Do you know who gave me the compass?”*

“Oooh...that’s an interesting one. Indeed I do.” After a few moments of silence, Tommy huffed, *“You aren’t going to tell me who though, are you.”*

“Nope.”

“Figures, nex-”

Wilbur’s hand wrapped around Tommy’s wrist and his heart stopped, eyes flying wide. He pulled forward and it felt like his soul was pulled from his body, the harpy’s hand cold as ice as it clamped tighter around his wrist.

*Sharp nails pressed to his skin as the taller man gripped his jaw, forcing him to look into eyes that glowed a brilliant gold, **“I was carried into a dark room, and then I was set on fire. I wept, and then my head was cut off.”***

Wings large enough to block out of the sun spread out as wide as possible in the stone prison, ancient runes on the walls glowing in different hues, swirling on the ground creating a circle around the harpy. The walls rumbled, dust falling as runes climbed up the chains and around the room. Tommy struggled, feeling like his chest was collapsing in on itself, "Let fucking go!!" "Answer Tommy!!" Wilbur practically snarled, "Quickly!!"

"Fuck you!"

"I do not have the patience for this boy, answer me!"

Terrified of the room collapsing around them, the blonde answered in a panic, "A-a candle?!"

*There was a crack of thunder and the runes around them flickered, unease laying in Tommy's stomach as Wilbur's face lit up in vicious delight, "Yes! Yes! Now, what is **black** when you buy it, **red** when you use it, and **gray** when you throw it away?!"*

*This felt wrong. This felt like he was doing something he wasn't meant to, yet his mouth moved on its own- something possessing him as he calmed, "**Charcoal.**"*

There were distant shouts as the sound of stones grinding against each other was heard. The shaking of the room grew more violent, and somewhere in the far distance he heard a pained sob.

*"Good- yes, yes-" Wilbur let out a breathless laugh, "**I give you a group of three. One is sitting down, and will never get up. The second eats as much as is given to him, yet is always hungry. The third goes away and never returns.**"*

"A...a stove...."

There was a crack, "Yes, come on-!"

*"**Fire...**"*

A snap, and hurried feet.

*"**And....smoke..**"*

The shackle around Wilbur's left ankle snapped, and he let out a surprised laugh.

“Fuck- stop him!!”

The harpy's smile dropped and he turned his head, snapping and snarling at the intruders, “No! Stay away from me!! Stay-”

When Wilbur let go, Tommy stumbled back, the room spinning as he felt faint. He tripped over his feet, falling back yet never landing- the room around him fading away.

=x=

Tommy woke with a sharp gasp, sweating and gasping for air. Hearing labored gasps beside him, he looked to his side and he nearly screamed.

Tubbo's eyes were wide open, yet he didn't seem conscious. His eyes were glowing white with the sclera being void black, black veins creeping from his eyes as he trembled. It looked like he was dying, tears streaming down his face and entire body trembling as there was a strong static feeling in the air, “Tubbo!!”

Quickly, he grabbed the younger's shoulders and shook him, and in seconds Tubbo woke. The shot up, eyes returning to normal and the black veins disappearing as he sobbed. His chest rose and fell from deep breaths, and Tommy pulled him in tightly, “Fuck- you're okay- you're fine, it- it's fine...”

Tubbo held on tightly, tears seeping into Tommy's shirt as he gasped for air, “It was so cold-” He rambled, voice unsteady and pitched, “So so fucking cold- I couldn't find you but- but I could hear you and I tried to find you- god's I tried to find you- there- I-”

“I'm right here Tubbo, it's okay- slow down...” Tommy rubbed his back, trying to steady his own heartbeat as he felt Tubbo's hammering in his chest. The pale blonde sniffled, trying to slow down his speech, “After a while- it was like I fell off an edge. I felt like I was falling- it was dark-, and it...i-it almost felt like I was in an endless void...trapped...”

“You're fine now. It's okay...”

“I was so scared-”

“I know, but it's over. You're alive, I'm alive, and everything is just fine. It wasn't real.”

After a second, Tubbo muttered, “You promise?”

Tommy let out a shaky laugh, “Yea. I promise. Cross my heart and all that bullshit.” Tubbo snorted, letting out a muffled, unsteady giggle at the statement.

“Alright boys, we-” Schlatt peeked into the wagon, stopping as he saw what happened. His brow knit together in concern, “Fuck- you two alright? We were only gone for a few minutes to find a good place to settle for a few days, what happened-” Tubbo remained quiet, still trying to calm down from the nightmare as Tommy looked at Schlatt with uncertainty. He opened his mouth before snapping it shut again, mulling over what to do. He could tell Schlatt- maybe he’d know what had happened- but...he wasn’t sure. This was more Tubbo’s decision rather than his, honestly. So...

“Tubbo had a really bad nightmare that apparently felt really real, that’s all. Nothing bad.” Schlatt looked at him, unsure.

“Well...if you say so kid...just...” He looked unsure of something himself, inhaling, “Just know you can talk to me, okay? Both of you can.” The blonde nodded, and Schlatt sighed, “Alright. Now, we found a place to settle for a bit- give the horses a rest and spend a bit of time off the road. Sound good?” He nodded, and the older man pulled himself up to drive the wagon again.

Tommy didn’t bring up what he’d seen. He didn’t bring up the winged man’s riddles. Didn’t bring up anything about Wilbur Dempsey Soot, or glowing runes, or anything about it at all.

He simply tucked it away, along with the endless questions stirring inside him. There was a time and place.

But this was not it.

=x=

Dream leaned against the wall, watching as the smith picked at the locks of Ant’s manacles. The young woman was dainty and looked like she couldn’t lift a hammer, but she was clearly stronger than she looked. Sam stood by the hybrid’s side, a comforting hand on his shoulder as the shorter boy sat anxiously. It was hard finding a smith who wouldn’t question the legality behind removing them, but thankfully this town was much friendlier to those who weren’t purely human or knew magic. It was quick to tell the difference between a town that was like that compared to a town that was more closed-minded. Friendlier towns were more advanced and seemed very prosperous, while more closed-minded ones tended to struggle a bit more.

“Did you hear what happened in Donadim?”

Dream's ears perked up as the smith's husband spoke up. He hadn't noticed the man before, as he'd been delicately arranging colorful, fresh flowers into a beautiful metal vase. He was surprisingly burly with a hardened face, but the way he held the flowers was incredibly gentle. The blonde grew curious. Donadim was George's kingdom, but it was far down the way from where they were in Anadell, "No? What happened?"

"There was an attack- somebody had crashed into Prince George and Princess Maia's wedding and kidnapped Prince George." He stated, voice gravelly. Dream almost laughed, but managed to keep his calm, "Is that so?"

"Mhm. I swear, that kingdom has the worst luck- because guess what happens a few days later? King dies from his wounds after somebody released all the people in the dungeons, and then the Queen just drops dead despite being perfectly healthy!" Dream froze, stomach sinking as the man spoke up, "Their scrambling to find a new ruler now, but with the Prince having been an only child and the rough seas in that area lately- I think they are as good as gone. People might as well flee while they can."

"That's...fuck..."

"Yep. Real tragedy, but then again when has that kingdom ever been lucky."

Dream gave a soft, half-assed laugh at the comment, before swallowing nervously. What was he going to tell George? That his parents were dead and his kingdom was going to shit the moment he got his freedom? He felt a heavy guilt- the dungeon thing was his idea, even if Sappnap was the one who did it. He never meant for *that* to happen but...

There was a soft 'Aha!' from the smith as the final shackle fell to the ground, and Ant looked at it excited, kicking his legs freely.

"There you are sir's!"

Dream glanced at the shackles on the floor anxiously. Ant might have been freed from his own shackles, but now Dream felt as suddenly, he'd been chained by shackles of his own.

=x=

Techno followed Bad through the crowd passively, watching the siren's attention be drawn to every little thing. Nothing in the market really interested him, aside from an amusing display of items that were god-based. It was clearly just money-making idiocy- full of ridiculous dramatic masks of god's faces, items that were fake copies of things that supposedly belonged to other gods,

eccetera- but there was a particularly hilarious poster that had a silly doodle of him killing helpless children.

That was one of the stories about him that were false. He'd never killed children before, it was more like humans had a weird sense of what to sacrifice to him. Many stories about him were far from the truth, but he supposed people just liked to make him sound more ferocious and bloodthirsty than he really was- even if he was, admittedly, very bloodthirsty. Nobody knew the real story behind how he'd earned his god-hood either. He'd heard a million different interpretations.

Some say he slaughtered and conquered countless towns in Keralis' name. Some say he was a kind-hearted king who turned to bloodshed by the death of his wife, killing to fill a hole in his heart. Others say he grew up cold-hearted and blood was the only thing that made him feel alive. So on, so forth.

Yet, none of the stories he'd heard were even close to the truth, and that was something he was fine with. He didn't want just anybody to know.

"Techno, look!"

Bad's voice pulled him back to earth, and he turned to the short siren. He smiled excitedly, a crown of hibiscus flowers on his head. Techno snorted, a strange warmth swirling in his chest, "Cute."

"Here, here!" He picked up another one made of white jasmines and reached up. Techno rolled his eyes, humoring him by leaning forward and letting him put the flower crown on his head. He stood straight, giving a sarcastic, lazy smile, "So?"

Bad smiled happily, eyes lighting up, "It's a good look on you!"

"Eh, doesn't really fit the rest of my rough and tough look, but if you say so." Bad snickered, keeping walking, "I think it makes you look tougher." Techno snorted, "Sure, alright. We'll go with that."

Bad stopped, mouth falling open as excitement filled his eyes. Techno watched as his entire being lit up, bouncing on his heels slightly. He looked like he wanted to say something, and when the god looked around he saw where they were. They were in the center of town, decorations and candles in the air suspended by magic. A band was in full swing, and people danced in groups as big as five- though, most were just couples of two. Looking back at Bad, his eyes were now shiny- a sense of nostalgia radiating off of him as he watched people dance.

Bad felt a deep ache in his chest- longing's for a time long past and lost hitting him suddenly. He could almost see it- him and Skeppy dancing in the square, no beat or rhythm, just them having fun

as stupid kids in love and...

“Uh...Bad?”

He snapped out of it, blinking and looking at Techno. There was a single tear that slipped and he quickly whipped his eyes dry. Techno hesitated. He wasn't good with emotions. Wasn't good at reading signs or even people in general...

He also wasn't good at dancing, either. Techno had heard it before- that dancing was just like fighting- but that didn't work. In fights, you had an entirely different goal than you did in dancing. But...while that was true, he felt like that's what Bad wanted to do. Bad didn't want to ask though, because something Techno had learned over time was that Bad was very considerate. He probably didn't want to make Techno stand around- he'd feel guilty.

Bad laughed it off, “Sorry...remembered some things. We can just-” Bad jumped as Techno took his hand, “Do you...uh...do...you want to...” His tongue tangled a bit, anxiety filling his stomach and mouth suddenly feeling like sandpaper, “U-uh...” That was yet another thing he wasn't good with. His own emotions, and the words that came with.

What? He was a god, but he wasn't perfect at all. Techno was still a human at his roots. A human that was awkward and quite frankly very socially anxious. He took a deep breath, “Bad, do you want to dance?”

Bad's face turned red, “W-what?”

Techno made a frustrated noise akin to a whine, “By the gods, please do not make me ask again that was hard enough-” the siren let out a soft, nervous giggle, “I...Sure- I'd love to but are you sure you want to...?” He nodded, and Bad gripped his hand tightly- a bright smile spreading across his lips as he pulled the taller man behind him.

When the two made their way into the square, Techno was surprised by the disorganization. Nobody really was dancing in sync, just dancing in different styles. Bad took his other hand, and Techno yelped as they spun in circles. Every movement was a blur as Techno tried to keep up, face reddening in embarrassment as he cursed the fact that he had two left feet.

Bad watched as Techno tried to get a hand on it, and in his eyes he found it charming. He slowed down a bit, pulling a bit closer and slowing down to give Techno a chance to catch up. Techno grumbled, reorganizing himself, “I'm- sorry. I'm really not the best dancing partner...” Bad laughed, “You're fine, Techno. It's cute.”

“I’m not cute.”

“Say’s you.”

Techno huffed, not retorting as Bad continued, “Try and follow my feet, okay?”

“Alright...”

Techno watched Bad’s steps, following them carefully. Before long, Techno fell into a rhythm- a smile stretching across his face as he started trying new things. He had a faint memory of trying something, and soon his body moved on its own. The two of them lost in each other as they felt free to make small mess-ups and mistakes- the only people left to impress being each other. As another song ended, Techno suddenly spun the short man around- a squeak leaving Bad as he was suddenly dropped only to be caught by the others opposite arm. Their laughter was infectious, foreheads pressed together as they stopped to catch their breaths. Bad’s heart was pounding in his chest, filled with a warm, fuzzy feeling.

“S-see? You’re a fine dancing partner...” Bad laughed out as he was hoisted to his feet, and Techno chuckled, “Whatever you say.”

Looking to the sky, they were surprised to see it was night already, “I...guess we should head back.”

“I suppose so. You lead the way?” Techno joked. Bad rolled his eyes, huffing as Techno took the hint and began walking.

As they went, they barely noticed the fact that they still held each other's hands.

=x=

“No. It isn’t possible.”

“I’m afraid so...”

“No!! He isn’t- he c-can’t-”

Tear’s fell on the desk as A6d watched the captain with bored eyes. He flicked his wrist, sending away the vision. Skeppy took deep breaths, heart feeling like it was torn out.

“It appears that someone else is winning him over. Such a shame, really. He was supposed to be yours, hm?” His hand shot out, grabbing his inkwell and using all his force to throw it at A6d in rage. The demon stepped aside and it smashed against the wall, “He isn’t! He is mine! He- he-” Skeppy slid to his knees, body wracked with soft sobs as he shook his head in denial. A6d watched with a smirk, walking over, “He *is* supposed to be yours, and- well I wouldn’t say you’ve lost him forever. You just have to...try and get rid of the problem, hm?”

Skeppy glared at A6d weakly, “I’m not that stupid. You said he’s a god, right? I can’t kill a god.” “Or can you~?”

Skeppy froze, watching the demon cautiously but undyingly curious and desperate, “...how...” A6d chuckled, voice a purr, “Listen, and listen close. I’ll only tell you this once.”

=x=

Somewhere, the sky god paced late at night.

“Something new is afoot brother. Puzzle pieces are being put into place, gears are turning...I can sense it.”

“You and me both.” Amusix stirred the sea lazily and Xisuma’s wings fluttered, “But, you and I have rules and you know this.”

“Do not interfere with humankind...I know.”

“We must watch, brother. Watch and simply accept whatever our creations do.”

Fennel, Coriander, & Zinnia

Chapter Notes

Terribly sorry about how long this chapter took. Life has been rough and after the Carson situation everything piled up, breaking on me- so I tried putting some energy into something new. I'm happy to announce that once I put out the next chapter, I'll have a new fic up called "It Runs in the Family". It is based off an au of mine that I've talked about on the fic's discord server, so to those who aren't on the server: good luck figuring out what its about ;)

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>
Tumblr: fantasticalbee

That being said, enjoy! <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Alright boys, let’s set up here!”

Schlatt walked around to the front, patting the horse’s side gently, “C’mon big guy, time for a nice break...”

Schlatt undid the harness on the large stallion carefully. The horse snorted, stomping his hoof and kicking up dirt, “Yeah yeah, I know. You’re antsy, I getcha.” There was another snort before the horse let Schlatt lead him away from the wagon. Cap chuckled from where he was, running a coarse brush through his mares mane, “He’s a snippy one, huh?”

“Yep. It’s been a long time since Night had to do something like this though- so I’d probably be all fuckin’ snappy about it too.”

“True. Say, he’s a Friesian right?”

“Mhm. A big, strong beauty...”

“Aren’t Friesians quite expensive? How did you manage to get him?”

Schlatt snorted, “The farmer just really wanted him gone, and if I didn’t take him they would have

just put him down. He was way too feisty to pull carriages and even broke a few.”

Cap nodded with a hum of understanding. Tommy leaped out of the wagon, squinting to look past the two, “The fuck? Why didn’t we just ride into town?” The eldest cringed, looking towards the golden blond, “Utindee isn’t exactly the friendliest of towns. We’re only going to be entering to briefly restock, but that’s it. We aren’t staying a second more.”

“It’s still daylight, so I say we split up just for a few hours just to scope out the market.” Schlatt chimed in, “And by split up, I mean you keep an eye on the boys and I head into town.” The noirette gave a soft laugh to that, “Yea, I figured you’d say that.” He raised a hand before Tommy could protest, “I’m going to need some help setting up, think you two can help me out?”

Tommy and Tubbo looked at each other, whispering briefly before Tommy huffed and spoke up again, “I guess it’s better than just sitting around...”

“Great! Now,” Schlatt grabbed a small bag of coins, tying it to his belt, “I’ll check out the market, and maybe if you guys are good for Cap- I’ll uh...bring something back?” Tubbo let out a little cheer and Tommy smiled a bit, prompting a tiny smile to tug at Schlatt’s lips. He tied Night to a post, turning and giving a wave before walking towards the town.

Cap clapped, “Now, let’s get started.”

As Schlatt arrived in town, the sour faces and gloomy air were no surprise. He’d been through this town before and had enough experience to see that it was a place to keep your guard up. Utindee was a town that was on a path to its own destruction, with a rate of how many citizens were leaving that just kept climbing and a significantly high prejudice against witches or anybody who knew anybody magic of the sort. If you looked any bit less than human, it was horribly likely that they’d increase prices specifically for you.

In a simple sense, he hated this town.

‘Keep your head low, but look like someone they don’t want to mess with.’ He reminded himself, pulling his shoulders back and keeping his chin up. He kept one hand on his sword, quiet, eyes hardened and sharp.

Walking through the market, he kept mental note of those around him. Most were just as wary as

him, but some chose to show it while others did not. Most of the faces he saw were hardened from grief, had sad eyes, sunken faces, and numerous stress lines.

Schlatt was pulled from his thoughts as someone bumped into him, stumbling a bit, "Ey! Watch it, asshole!" The person cursed, sneering before trying to walk past. His hands shot out, grabbing their wrist and yanking them back, "The fuck?! Let go!!" They snapped. Looking down, he could see it was a male that was a few years younger than him, with dark brown eyes, tan skin, and black messy hair.

"My coins. Now."

"I don't have your fuckin- aH-!" He choked as he squeezed his wrist, a sharp yelp leaving him as he dropped Schlatts coin purse. The brunette gave an unamused look and the thief smiled sheepishly, laughing nervously.

"...Oops?"

Schlatt scoffed, "Yea. Oops." He let go and reached down, scooping up his coin purse again. Standing, he tied it to his belt again- feeling eyes on him. He looked up to find the thief still standing there, rubbing his wrist as he stared, "You...aren't from around here." Schlatt rolled his eyes, "Gee, what gave it away?" Turning, he started walking away- only for the guy to follow him, "Woah! Hold on-

"Nope."

"C'mon, we can talk about this! Please?" He spoke hurriedly, struggling to keep in stride with the taller man as he was ignored. He grabbed Schlatt's arm and Schlatt whipped around to glare at him. The both of them froze, eyes widening a bit in sync as a sharp static feeling resided where the thief's hand-laid, Schlatt's heart twisting as eyes painfully familiar made him breathless.

"Please don't turn me in..." He pleaded, voice a quiet whine that begged for mercy. It was like he was sent back in time...

"Plea...please d...on't.....in..." Schlatt stirred awake as he heard a soft voice beside him in the bed. His eyes adjusted to the darkness of the room as he shifted, yawning. He sat up and looked to the other man in the bed, registering the fact he was quivering and muttering in his sleep. He turned,

pity filling him as he leaned over the other man. Reaching, Schlatt brushed his hands out of his eyes, heart aching as he saw the fact the other man was crying in his sleep- brows knitted together and face twisted in anguish.

He put a gentle hand on his shoulder, shaking him awake subtly, "Wil?"

The harpy's eyes snapped open as he awoke, shooting up as he cried 'No' shrilly. Schlatt snapped back as Wilbur gasped for air, trembling from his core to the tips of his wings. Gold irises and sharp, slitted pupils flickered over to him, still seeming to be in distress from the nightmare, "S...schlatt?"

"Hey..." Schlatt reached out and pulled the other man in, letting his face bury into his chest and cry while his arms snaked around him, claws digging into the back of his shirt. Wilbur curled into him, wings wrapping around them both securely and words slightly slurred as he blabbered, "Please- please don't turn me in- please please please-"

His pleas were like a cold knife to the human's heart, one hand rubbing the base of the hybrid's wings as comfortingly as possible and the other tangled in his hair while scratching gently.

"Schlatt?"

He looked down at Wilbur, breath hitching as gold swirled with warm brown. His normally dilated pupils were now blown a bit wider, face tear-streaked and red around his eyes, looking the weakest and most pitiful Schlatt had ever seen him.

"You...you wouldn't turn on me, right?"

He paused for a moment, mouth dry as he swallowed, "Of course not."

Schlatt blinked, voice cracking as he shook his head, "I...I never said I was."

The noirette looked taken aback, tilting his head as he watched Schlatt turn and start to walk away. He followed cautiously, footsteps matching Schlatt's as they slinked through the crowds. The brunette ignored the holes being burned into his back, stopping every so often to mark down another price into a small pocketbook. After several minutes, the noirette spoke up, "You don't know where you're going, do you?"

Schlatt jumped, head snapping toward him. This time, instead of fear, the shorter man's eyes were lidded with a smug smile, arms folded over his chest.

"Of course I do!" He snapped back sharply, scowling. The noirette's eyes sparkled with mischief, giving a sarcastic little 'mhm' that hit Schlatt's nerves dead on. The brunette huffed, looking forward and beginning to walk again, "Tan guapo pero tan estúpido y testarudo..." Schlatt heard the man mutter, following him still. Growing weary of this charade, Schlatt whipped around and grabbed the man by his arm- making him yelp as he pulled him into an abandoned alleyway. He shoved him to the wall, pinning the shorter there. After he got over the shock, the other man gave a sly smirk, "Ohhh, getting a bit touchy are we?"

Schlatt was too annoyed to acknowledge the remark as he narrowed his eyes and pushed back, leaving the other man leaning against the wall, "Why are you so *insistent* on following me?!" He hissed. The other man rolled his eyes, "You with the guys with the wagon outside of town, right?"

Schlatt froze, "How did you know that?"

"Lucky guess~" He purred, earning an annoyed scoff from the older man, "Look, kid-"

"Ay! I'm not a kid, got it? I'm fucking twenty-five! Not a kid."

"Yea? And I'm thirty-one, so-" The man whistled, "Seriously?!" He shouted, eyes wide as he looked Schlatt up and down with hands on his hips. He took a step away and sauntered around Schlatt, eyes sharp and critical of every inch of him. He stopped in front of him again and leaned back a bit, head tilting a bit as his lips pulled into a cheeky grin. Interest and mischief shined in those dark brown eyes, biting his lip as he drawled out, "Damn, you do *not* look like you are in your thirties..."

Schlatt let out a surprised guffaw, in disbelief at the forwardness of this stranger, "The fuck's that supposed to mean?!"

"Means you're hot for a guy in your thirties."

"You tried to rob me less than fifteen minutes ago, and now you're flirting? If trying to rob me was an attempt at a conversation starter, I can see why you're fuckin' single." Schlatt shook his head, scowling at the shorter man as he shrugged with his hands up, "In my defense, man, I didn't really get a good look at you before! But *now* ?"

He slinked by his side, eyes lidded with a sly, cat-like grin, "I am *definitely* loving what I'm seeing~"

Schlatt blinked, his face heating up in shock, "I- you-" He sputtered, flabbergasted. He made a disgruntled noise, not quite sure how to handle this sudden approach. The brunette hadn't had someone flirt with him so directly in a long time, and while he briefly considered playing this stranger's game he decided against it in the end. He didn't have the time, "Look just- Simple answer, why are you fuckin' following me? Don't you have anything better to do?"

The young man brushed off the second part, "You're probably looking for stuff for you and your little group right? Horse stuff, supplies, etcetera, etcetera?" Schlatt gave a subtle nod and he grinned, "Then how about this- a favor for a favor. You aren't going to turn me in, so I owe you now-" He opened his mouth to interrupt, but the shorter was quick to put a finger up, "Ah ah ah! It's personal moral and just a thing we do here. When you do something for one person, you owe them however much that thing they did was worth back."

"So it's basically like a life debt."

"You got it. There *are* limits though, like if you just returned an item to someone you can't ask them to like- break a law or something for you in return. You get what I mean?"

Schlatt pinched the bridge of his nose, "Yea. So what you are saying is that you want to help me to get rid of this little debt you owe me because I'm not going to turn you in for trying to rob me."

"Precisely!" The man chirped, "So, what do you say?"

For a second, Schlatt considered. This man was a local, so he could be a big help with locating stalls with cheaper prices and better items. He was a useful asset.

Slightly annoying and a bit too... *forward* with his advances? Yes. But his services were useful none-the-less. If it meant better stuff and saving gold, then it was worth it to put up with the small headache.

"Fine." The man gave a victorious grin and waved him to follow. However, as he turned Schlatt was taken aback. The man had cuts in the back of his shirt for a pair of small beige wings that were folded perfectly against his back. From how still they were, the brunette could've mistaken them for performer's props or a cape of feathers, but years of having seen Wilbur's wings up close had

made it easy to tell they were *very* real and highly uncomfortable.

While he looked human from the front, to any keen eye the back was a dead giveaway. The man looked back at him, raising a brow, "What're you staring at, huh?" Schlatt met his eyes and saw a twinge of anxiety in them, obviously trying to keep his cool as Schlatt stared. He quickly made up an excuse, "Your ass."

The man's eyes widened, suddenly becoming the speechless one now as Schlatt kept a straight face. His face reddened a bit as he processed the words, but he burst into laughter soon after, the sound pitched- reminding Schlatt slightly of a hyena- and infectious enough to make the hint of a smile start tugging at Schlatt's lips, "Wow-! Wa-how! Okay! You really just-" He shook his head as he laughed, pretending to wipe a tear for his eye as he started to calm down, "Well, I'm glad my ass is so nice for you to look at then." He was still giggling a bit as he grabbed Schlatt's arm and pulled him along.

Following behind the man, they pushed into and through the crowd. As the two walked, a thought came to mind and Schlatt finally piped up, "By the way, I'm gonna need your name." The man tensed, chuckling nervously as he looked back at Schlatt, "Ah...that'll be a problem. Would a nickname work?"

Schlatt considered for a second before nodding, "Nickname, then." The man relaxed with slight relief, releasing a breath, "You can call me Q."

"Just Q?"

"Mhm. Or you can call me Big Q, that's what most of the others call me." Schlatt almost laughed at the pride in the man's voice, " *Big Q*?" He snorted, eyeing him skeptically as Q scrunched up his nose, "What?"

"Where the hell did *Big* come from? You're like 5'2 or some shit and a petty thief- ain't nothing *Big* about you!" He chuckled, watching the man's face turn scarlet as he squawked his offense, "Oh, sure, laugh it up! For your information, I'm 5'6! What's your name, huh?"

"Initials are J.J.S."

"And that stands for?"

"Jonathan Jebediah Schlatt. But most just call me Schlatt."

"Hmph." Q looked away with an eye roll, covering his mouth with a small smile as he murmured under his breath, "Qué nombre tan estúpido. Pinche Jonathan Jebediah Schlatt, cómo...solo..."

Schlatt raised a brow, smirking, "What was that?"

"I said your name was stupid."

"Suurreee. Oh, like "Big Q" isn't the most obvious attempt at trying to sound important I've ever heard."

"Shut up man- what the hell kind of name is "Schlatt"?" He shot back, the two men grinning as they playfully bickered. It wasn't long before they reached the area of the market that Schlatt had been looking for, and Q rambled facts about the market as Schlatt focused on jotting down prices. Every once in a while, Schlatt would stop to observe Q- trying to decipher exactly what he was. Despite the wings, he wasn't a Harpy and that was a clear- no claw-like nails, no sharpened canines, no slitted pupils, simply just no physical giveaways that Harpies usually had- but then what has he? He simply just looked like a human with little wings popped on- so perhaps an avian hybrid?

No, that couldn't be it either- avian hybrids still had sharpened claw-like nails and slightly pointed ears. Schlatt was slightly stumped, but simply ignored it.

As he went along, Schlatt's ears perked up as he heard a man call, "Rare charms! We got rare charms and enchanted items here!" He looked to the voice to see a man in a bear pelt and scruffy beard. His hair and beard were a vivid red that was streaked by white and grey, one eye milky white and the other a deep green. On his shoulder- holding the pelt up over his shoulder- was a hunter guild emblem.

His mind went to his promise to the boys, and he snapped shut his small notebook. Schlatt nudged Q, and the noirette looked where he pointed. He got a look of recognition and cringed, like the sight of the man left a bad taste in his mouth, "That's...Gunther. He's from a monster hunting guild just a bit outside of town..." Schlatt raised a brow curiously, but he got an idea why Q didn't like him. He was a monster hunter, and most monster hunters simply hunted down whatever wasn't human- and Q certainly wasn't human.

"What do you think of the stuff he sells?"

"We talkin' quality, or opinion?"

"Quality. I can already tell you hate him."

"Damn right." Q huffed, crossing his arms, "His items are a hundred percent real- not phony stuff. It's quality charms and shit, if you're into collecting that. He's a nice guy, I guess- he scams people really often though." Schlatt hummed and the shorter man looked at him, "Why do you ask?"

Schlatt hummed, "I've got two kids with me. Promised them that if they behaved, I'd have something for them when I got back. I reckon I can get them something there."

Q didn't answer, shrugging it off, "Go ahead then I guess." Nodding, Schlatt approached the stand as Q trailed behind. The man- Gunther- gave him a wide, toothy grin, "You sir- you look like a man who knows a bit about monsters. Why don't you take a look at my wares?" Schlatt didn't acknowledge him, only humming as his eyes roamed at the items.

Silently, he tried to reason to himself- what would the two like? Tommy might appreciate a weapon of sorts- Tubbo was suffering from nightmares, so maybe something to ward them off...?

Schlatt wanted to get them something useful on their journey, but also something they'd want to hold on to without him telling them so- something they would really like.

Problem was, he had no idea what that would be.

The man crossed his arms, "Well? Anything in particular you are looking for?"

"I have two young boys with me traveling. What do you suggest?"

Gunther raised a brow, mouth taking an 'o' shape, "Well, that depends. Young ones usually like things like phoenix feathers, unicorn hair- pretty things, you see. Some pretty things can be useful too."

"One of them seems to be experiencing nightmares- anything to help with that?"

"You're in luck!" Gunther reached under the stand and rummaged around, pulling stuff out. Eventually, he stood again and showed Schlatt a small hairpin. He looked at it with interest as Gunther held it flat in his palm. "This here jewel is a ward. You see, in this little gem-" He pointed to a misty gem in the center, "is the trapped soul of a lightened banshee. When the wearer has any nightmares come along or people trying to invade 'is mind, the banshee it'll go in and scream at them, scarin' 'em off!" Schlatt looked at the man, amused by his dramatics as he continued, "The little ribbon around it is embroidered with unicorn's hair, to bring peaceful dream's in the nightmare's place and keep the wearer safe from the banshee itself. As long as he wears this, his mind is protected from invasion is waking and in sleep, as well as free of nightmares."

Chewing his bottom lip, Schlatt considered for a moment. The boys weren't the types to think something like a hairpin was emasculating- right? He tries to think, and for a moment he can slightly recall having seen Tubbo wearing things like bows before, "Right...I think he'll like it. But...as for the other..." Schlatt looked at the items in the shop and pointed to an item in the wall, "What's that?"

Gunther grinned, "Oh, you have quite the eye..." He grabbed the item off the wall, showing it to Schlatt. It was a brooch in the shape of a flower, the petals being carefully cut quartz and the center being topaz, "Tell you what- I'll cut this to half price if you let the boy figure out what it is on his own." Schlatt raised a brow, not liking the odds, "How can I be certain you're not just bullshitting me into buying some fancy jewelry?"

"I can assure you, I'm truly not."

Schlatt picked up the brooch, looking at it quietly, "How much for both?"

"That'll be fifty gold, sir."

Schlatt winced. That...was going to put a deep hole in his pocket. Fuck.

"You sure I can't talk you into anything lower? Seems an awful lot."

"Nope, it's a firm standing price. Nothing more, nothing less- both these items were very hard for me to make. Expensive materials and all that." Schlatt was silent, staring at both as he was suddenly stumped. He wasn't sure he could buy these and still afford tomorrow's supply run, heart

sinking a bit.

Dammit- why was he feeling so guilty? Why was he putting so much value onto buy something for two kids he didn't even know all that well? This wasn't like him at all. In all honesty, had it been any time before he would've said fuck no and walked away, he couldn't even believe he was hesitating with this.

Yet something tugged at his heartstrings when he imagined how disappointed they would look it he didn't bring them anything back- and he wasn't one to cheap-shot a gift...

"I..."

"Hold on just one minute." He jumped as the items were snatched from in front of him suddenly, turning his head to the side to see Q looking at them with a critical eye. Suddenly Gunther's entire demeanor changed, eyes narrowing on the shorter man as he grumbled sourly, "Big Q."

Q didn't even look at him as he responded, "Gunther."

Gunther sneered, "Little brat- Do you mind?! I'm trying to sell those to this man." Q chuckled, giving the man a sour smile, "Yea, I know. And I'm doing my job and calling your bullshit, buddy."

"Big Q..." The man growled in warning a Schlatt watched with confusion and intrigue. Q glared right back, "These are not worth twenty-five gold each. Plain and simple. First off, what's trapped in this gem isn't a banshee- it's a mare. Just as effective as a banshee, but far easier to catch. This brings the value to ten gold at most." He put down the hairpin and brought up the broch, "This isn't a real topaz, and the rose-quartz for the petals isn't even rose-quartz, its carved Manticore bone that's been turned slightly pink after being soaked in rose water. At most? Seven gold." He put down the broch beside the hairpin and Schlatt gaped as Q crossed his arms with a sharp glare at Gunther, "Added up, this makes both worth at least seventeen gold- give or take a coin. So that's all this man will be paying, is that clear?"

Gunther's jaw was clenched, looking like he was about to pop a blood vessel as he stared at Q. He opened his mouth to snap back, when suddenly Q lowered his voice, "Or am I going to have to tell the court that I suspect you of witchcraft? After all, that broch is a witch's item, is it not? You. Didn't. Even. Make it." He hissed, and suddenly the larger man paled, shutting up as he gulped, "No- no don't ah- Twelve gold. You can take it for twelve gold." Q smirked, nodding his head to Schlatt, "That's much better."

Schlatt almost laughed as he took out the gold and handed it over, picking up the two items and turning from the stall. Q followed with an air of satisfaction, and Schlatt grinned at him, "What was that?"

"What was what?"

The elder rolled his eyes, "You know what I mean."

Q merely shrugged, "Gunther pulls shit like that and I hate it, is all. I'm also just used to debates and stuff, I guess."

Schlatt hummed and walked with him, heading back out of town, "Either way- seems you don't owe me anymore."

"Seems I don't." Q murmured, and the two fell into silence as the noirette led him out of town. When they reached the outskirts, the two exchanged a brief goodbye as the sun set in the distance, before finally parting ways.

=x=

"Three...two...one!" Tommy brought the axe down and with a loud crack, it passed through the rest of the log. His eyes light up as he yelled, "Holy fuck- I did it!!" Tubbo cheered as Cap clapped, a large smile on his face, "See? Told you that you could," He picked up another log and walked over, ruffling Tommy's hair as he set the log upright on the stump, "Now, let see you do it again."

Tommy smirked, confidence swelling in his chest as he gripped the axe handle tighter. He knew he'd probably end up with blisters and aching muscles after today- but damn, it was a lot of fun.

"Three...two...one." The muscle in his arms tensed as he focused on the center of the log, bringing the axe around and down straight on the log. There was a splinter and a crack, and again it split in half.

"Shit- you guys seem to be having lots of fun without me."

Tommy looked to see Schlatt walking back over. Tubbo scrambled up, smiling, "Schlatt! You'll never guess what we did today!"

"Oh?" He gave an amused smile, "Well- fuckin' tell me then!"

"The Captain took us hunting! He shot a boar!!" Schlatt looked at Cap with a raised brow, and the

man merely shrugged, "We needed food," he gestured to the fire, where the boar was currently being cooked, "And I couldn't just leave them alone. That would've been irresponsible."

Tommy wedged the axe in the stump and picked up the cut logs, tossing a few in the fire and stacking the rest. The brunette gave Cap a shrug as if to say "that's fair".

"While we were out there, we found this dude in the woods who had an arrow in his side. He passed out, so we decided to bring him here to patch him up." Tommy continued for Tubbo, seeing that the younger had gotten slightly distracted. Schlatt tensed, "You brought a stranger?" He looked at Cap in disbelief, and now it was the noirette's turn to shrug, "What did you expect us to do- leave him for dead?"

"No, but-" He shook his head, "Nevermind. So, I assume they were good?"

"For the most part, yep."

Schlatt grinned, "Good. C'mere, I got you both something each." He walked over to Tubbo, "This is a new hairpin. It's enchanted to help with your nightmares." The pale blonde held out his hands and took the hairpin, eyes alight with excitement, "Woah...cool!"

Next, he turned to Tommy, gently placing the flower brooch in his hands. Tommy looked at it with confusion, "You...got me a flower pin?"

"It's a brooch, and it was made by a witch." He watched Tommy's brows pinch together in confusion and rolled his eyes, "There's something special it can do, but you need to figure it out yourself." The blonde shook his head, "But-"

There was a loud groan of pain that came from one of the setup tents, interrupting Tommy. The four of them listened to sounds of shuffling, and eventually, Cap stood up- walking over to the tent. His voice was soft, "Hey- you should really be resting, you're injured-"

"Please- I need some fresh air- c-can..." The man's voice was strained as he tried to exit, and with a soft sigh Cap moved to let him walk out.

When Schlatt saw the man, his heart stopped dead- eyes wide as he took a bated breath.

'No...' He thought to himself. He couldn't believe what he was seeing- as Cap helped the man stand and he looked around with hazy eyes. He was shirtless, only having bandages around his

midsection that were slightly blood-stained. He was pale and a bit shorter than Schlatt, with lean muscle and light brown hair with dirty blonde streaks that were incredibly messy- green eyes striking and familiar.

Schlatt felt his heart ache as their eyes met, a lump forming in his throat as he tried to speak.

The man's eyes widened as they landed on Schlatt, freezing in place as if he didn't believe what he was seeing.

At that moment, only a single name managed to leave Schlatt's lips.

"Slime...?"

Chapter End Notes

So. Todays stream, huh?

Fuck yea <3

Begonia, Crab Blossom, & Marigold

Chapter Notes

I have another fic out now called "It runs in the family" that focuses on a smaller cast but with a lot darker subject matter! That being said, enjoy!! <3
The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>
Tumblr: fantasticalbee

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Slime groaned as he sat down, holding his side with a wince. Was it just him, or did he just forget how much of a pain it was to be alive?

Schlatt helped him, muttering to himself as he rechecked the injured man's bandages. Not a word had passed between them since the realization, and silence fell once again as he finished checking. The brunette merely leaned back against the wall, unable to comprehend what was happening.

“So...how are you, buddy?” The immortal’s voice was strained, and when Schlatt looked at him he offered a weak smile with tired eyes. Schlatt’s throat was dry, jaw clenched as he ran a hand through his hair, “How...how am I?! How am I?!” He guffawed, eye’s wide, “How do you *think* ?!” He softly hissed.

Slime winced, frowning a bit as he looked away, “I...could only hope your good...”

“Slime, I saw you die permanently! Because of *me* !” The blonde grimaced, the bitter taste of the apple still on the tip of his tongue.

"Just one bite...~"

He heard Schlatt purr, voice an echo that rang in his head. He didn't fight against the all too familiar arms around his waist, head swimming and the least clear it had even been. The taller man rocked him like they were dancing, and he never noticed the forbidden fruit being slipped into his hands until he was being urged forward. Schlatt's voice was as smooth as silk. It was a sound that was so familiar, warm, and trusting that his dizzy mind began to consider. Slime looked at the apple, shining and glittering in its' golden glory, and heard it whisper promises of his darkest desires.

He knew where this forbidden fruit was from. It only grew in the depths of the underworld, in the garden of Keralis' head judge- a man named Phil. Slime knew him well- you got to know the judge

of the dead after having slingshotted between life and death so many times- and every time he saw him he recognised that same pity in his eyes. Pity born from knowledge that Slime was one of the few beings he could never have precedence to end the suffering of. Pity born of knowledge that one man lived in an eternal loop of suffering, doomed to an endless cycle of death and rebirth, never to grow old and to only watch his loved ones drop like flies around him.

To the dead, eating the apple granted permission to be revived in your body and continue living. To the living, eating the apple granted a painful, but permanent death. No coming back, as it consumed every last bit of your soul until nothing remained.

And yet, nobody could tell what it could do to a being like him.

An immortal in a husk of a body, soulless and with only a single desire.

It felt like it was its own being, demons creeping into him and digging out that desire, promising to grant it. Promising that single thing- an unachievable paradise he longed for more than anything.

"Slime no!!" Slime heard Grizz's voice call out to him, trying to break past the fog of his mind. Slime whimpered, hands trembling as he cupped the apple gingerly, "I-i can't- It looks so good I-" His tongue twisted with lies. It wasn't the apple that looked good, but instead was the promises that wrapped around his mind.

It promised him release from the pain. It promised to bring an end to the loop, to bring him true ease and to finally bring him the finality that the endless sleep called death brought.

And gods, did he want it.

"Slime..." For a moment, his gaze broke to look up, eyes meeting Grizz's, the fallen angels' wings tucked behind him as Condi held him back. The two were on their knees, huddled together to prevent the twister-like winds from pulling them away- both their eyes on him with despair. His eye remained on them in return, as his heart twisted and wept for a life unobtainable. A life that promised love and companionship in a garden of peace.

A life that would end when they did, leaving him with yet another broken heart.

"Don't..."

Another voice echoed, clear through the beating rain and wild winds. He saw Phil past the treeline, standing unbothered by the nature around him, a slightly transparent mist around him. Beside him stood a larger man, dawning gold armor under a cape as red as freshly spilled blood,

features hard and unwavering. Phil had a fearful, stricken expression as he laid eyes on the golden apple in Slime's hands, and as soon as the armored man saw it he looked ready to snatch it away.

Yet, despite the warnings around him- Slime never once loosened his grip on the apple.

"Eat."

This time, it was a command as Schlatt's arms wound tighter around his stomach, and Slime's resolve broke within moments. He wanted freedom. He wanted release from the world of the living.

Slime brought the golden apple to his lips, cold as it pressed there and his mouth opened. His teeth sank into the soft flesh of the apple, and the world around him turned gold for a moment. Sweetness filled his senses, bliss leaving him ignorant to the agony to come. He heard three people cry out his name as juices seeped past his lips, mouth watering from the flavour.

Then it came.

Pain worse than any he'd ever felt. He swallowed the chunk of apple and then froze, eyes widening as it created a deep pit in his stomach. It felt like a thousand knives were pierced into him all at once, blood rushing and heart pounding faster and faster. He choked, coughing as the juices burned like acid on his tongue, stomach rolling as he tried to puke the apple chunk out. He felt himself tumble forward, muscles stiffening as he began to spasm- was this what finally dying felt like?

Agonized, strangled screams and sobs ripped themselves from his throat as it felt like his stomach was eating itself, like there was acid in his veins and it was like the pain would never stop.

Until it did, darkness eating the world around him- entering death-like sleep that set off events that Slime could never have predicted.

“That...reminds me.” Slime's expression darkened, “We need to talk about that.”

Schlatt's stomach sank, guilt heavy on his shoulders as he gazed back at the immortal being- noticing the haunted look in his eyes. Clearing his throat, he nodded gently, “Alright...let's talk.”

=x=

Wilbur paced as he waited, limping slightly from the heavier chain around his ankle. He was so close- so damn close to freedom and it was infuriating.

He could still taste blood in his mouth and chuckled tiredly. Well, they might have given him a new weight to contain him, but at least he had gotten a few good bites of Mjopa's arm in the process. He had sunk his teeth deep and hard into the mortal's arm a few good times, and he was sure the wound would leave that filthy ant incapable of checking in for a few days.

Good.

He was sick of seeing his face anyway.

“Wil.”

The harpy tensed, growling lowly as he recognized the voice, “Oh...” he hissed, looking back over his shoulder to see the judge of death standing there, “It’s you...”

“You-” The undead being chuckled nervously, “You say that as if you are unhappy to see me...” “Why are you here?” He snapped, “To mock me? To manipulate me into your fucking arms again?!!” He spun around, lunging at Phil only to stumble right through him and drop onto his hands and knees. Phil’s face dropped, heart twisting in agony at the sight before him.

“Wilbur...”

He only shook, anger eating at his soul, “Leave...”

“Please-”

“Leave!!” He shrieked, and in seconds the visage disappeared with a soft sigh- leaving him once more to his loneliness. Wilbur lowered himself onto his side, wrapping himself in his wings as silence once more filled the room. His gut twisted, the silence leaving him once more alone with the thoughts that ate at his skull- deep regret filling him at not letting Phil stick around longer. Praying for a voice to break through that suffocating silence that drove him mad.

“No- no wait-” His ears rang and he took deep breaths, eyes squeezing shut as he trembled. Out of nowhere his mind plummeted, curling in on himself as he trembled and his face hid in his hands. Wilbur’s voice left in short, faint whispering pleas- that little taste of a voice other than his owns breaking the silence not enough to drive away the digging intrusive thoughts, “C-come

back...please..."

He begs.

"I di..didn't mean it..."

He bargains.

"Please I won't...won't say it again..."

But it falls on deaf ears, his own pride having driven away those who care. There's irony to it all, how he falls in a loop for his own ego having to be built up by the people around him- so much so that he feels like he is above them and doesn't need them- only to have himself crumble the moment they leave.

It's hilarious, the fact that no matter how he tries to rise above it all, the cruel world around him makes sure that he is to remain in shambles. He tried to prove it to them all- tried to prove that he was more than the monster they accused him of being. Tried to be a hero or at the very least a friend to those around him. Only the accusatory fingers still pointed to him- still called him a bastard, a half-bred monstrosity, and freak of nature...

So he became what they called him, and he showed them all true freaks of nature. If he couldn't be their hero or their friend, he would be their monster and villain, instead. He was warned of his downfall by the one man he thought cared, warned of the tragedy his actions would bring, warned of the events foretold for a millenia.

But he ignored it all.

And in the end of it all, what did he end up with? When he played with forces he should have, when death itself told him of the danger he would face, when he himself knew of the atrocities he was committing...Did he stop?

No.

Wilbur rolled onto his stomach, propping himself up on his elbows as his claws scratched at the stones and moss on the ground- cold sweat dripping down his neck and forehead as he shakily forced himself up. He took deep, labored breaths, forcing himself to gain some composure as he felt small pebbles digging into his palms. Focusing on...something. Some memory.

Something to bring him to his feet again...

"Y'know, Phil once told me a really interesting story..."

"Phil? You mean like- your dad, Phi-"

*Wilbur snapped shut the book and glared sharply at the man across from him, making him jump in surprise. Schlatt grimaced, faltering under the harpies' gaze as he hissed out, "He is **not** my father. Is that clear?"*

"Y...yea..."

Wilbur huffed softly before getting up, "Anyway...he once told me a story...about the Sun and Moon." He could feel the other man's eyes on him as he recounted the tale, "When Xisuma and Amusix first created the world, they made others to share their burden. The first was Keralis, the god of the underworld. The two others were the moon goddess, Luna, and her other half, the sun god, Helios." With a flick of his wrist, sparks from his fingers made pictures on the wall to go with his story, "However, Helios was an untamed, brash, and unforgiving force. One day, a mortal stood on a peak and challenged him. He flew into a rage, cursing that human by taking his soul and giving him immortality...But this act did not satiate his hunger for the vengeance of his hurt ego, and the other god's feared he might bring an end to not only earth, but themselves as well. He went to earth in human form, and carved a valley of destruction. Fearful of him lashing out and killing them, the two old gods sent Luna to follow his trail of destruction and confront him."

Wilbur almost laughed as he heard Schlatt mutter something under his breath that sounded like "pussies", but kept his composure as he continued, "So, Luna did. She turned his burnt meadows into lush forests with the waves she brought in. She turned his craters into gardens and everything he destroyed she tried to bring new life- until finally she found Helios. She pleaded with him to stop this, but he refused. He had grown a taste for destruction and fear, and now he planned to overthrow Xisuma and Amusix themselves. He tried to offer Luna a hand in his plans, but she couldn't stand for such an act- thus, they fought. Many days and nights, the two fought each other with only one outcome in mind; that only one of them would come out of this alive."

Flickers and sparks of gold and silver clashed, sparks flying as Wilbur conducted the images, "Until, at all came to an end with a glorious eclipse. Luna overtook her other half, and unable to see another option- she slayed him, taking over the duty of the sun. Upon the sun god's death, she wept- for with his death, she felt as if a part of herself was ripped from her. Unbeknownst to her, her tears glowed as they fell to the earthly soil during the eclipse- and from her tears sprung a horror unlike any the world had seen. Born from both the shadows of the eclipse and the light tears of the moon, was a creature not quite god, but far from human. Knowing human kind would turn its back on it, it laid in the ground, preaching it's heart and loyalty to whatever child of the moon

would one day awake it from its slumber.”

Wilbur felt pity for the creature in the story. It never asked to be created, and yet it was so quickly shunned as a freak...

“Luna returned to Xisuma and Amusix with the sun god’s body, and it was then they asked her what she believed was right. Feeling overwhelmed by such duties, she decided that it was only fair to give the mortals a chance. She relinquished herself of her and Helios’ powers to create and destroy, and instead gifted them to two mortal souls. It was from these two mortals that the judgement of whether life deserved to go on or not was in. Two mortals, their souls tied from birth, a complete balance without ever knowing it. One with the power to destroy all life, able to die however many times as they can for the sake of protecting and their other half, with the power to create life all over again. Neither could truly live without the other. And with each death they are reborn with their souls in new bodies, meant to start their judgement again...”

“That’s...stupid.”

“Oh?”

“Yea- why the hell did she think it was a good idea to give mortals choice?”

Wilbur paused, only shrugging gently as the images faded away, “Don’t know. She just did.” Schlatt huffed, rolling his eyes, “Right...It just sounds like another fairytale to me.”

“Really?” Wilbur chuckled, raising a brow at the other man as he decided to humor him, “Alright, Tell me Schlatt...what do you think happened?”

That’s right. It wasn’t all for naught...

Wilbur slowly stood, recounting it all. Soon, he’d have the fruits of his labor. Soon, it would all come together.

He just needed to wait to be set free from his chains. It would happen as long as he was patient, and he knew it wouldn’t be terrible long. The boy’s magic had weakened the chains, and as long as the creature stayed in its deep sleep he wouldn’t have anything standing in his way. The sequence of events had already started, he just needed to wait.

The start of it all was a mortal isolated from those around him, with hair of snow and eyes pale blue that would become stained red with the blood he’d shed. Then, was the exile of a fairy with

emerald wings. Many, many years later would be the births of the sun and moon. After, the child of two warring species would meet the child whose birth brought together two warring clans, and together they'd grow from tragedy- blossoming love only to part with broken hearts. Thus came the final two events to solidify the future.

An immortal tempted to take a bite of a golden apple from the underworld, and the half breed raised by the undead being sealed away for his crimes against mankind.

They couldn't keep him sealed away forever though.

He'd show them.

He'd show them all...

=x=

Tommy turned the brooch between his fingers, lips pursed as his eyes scanned the pages of the old journal. Tubbo laid against his chest, in deep sleep as the cape was draped over both of them. He'd given him the book, hoping Tommy could dig something out from it- but all he was seeing was that it was some random girls diary. It didn't seem like anything special...

His eyes flickered down to look at Tubbo's hair, seeing the hairpin Schlatt had bought him coming loose. Rolling his eyes, he put the book down and reached to untie it, careful not to wake the smaller. He hummed a tune as he combed his fingers through Tubbos hair, feeling himself relax more as he carefully tied it back loosely and fastened the pin, "There, nice and secured." He muttered, snickering quietly as he bragged to no one, "What would you do without me?"

"You really care for him, don't you?"

Tommy yelped, almost jumping as his head wiped toward the voice. A woman sat by him, a soft smile on her face as she tilted her head. His voice was strangled as he gaped, blinking quickly, "W...who...are you?"

"He calls me Niki." She gestured to Tubbo, and Tommy was stunned as he stared, "Are....are y..." He pause and shook his head, scolding, "No- No, wait, thats stupid. Of course you're a fucking ghost, because you sure as hell aren't alive..." The teen gestured to the woman's ghostly form, and she giggled softly. Protectively, he pulled Tubbo a bit closer and squinted at Niki, "Why are you here? Are you following us?"

She shook her head and pointed to the book beside him, “I...think I’m attached to that, for some reason.”

Tommy looked at the journal, finally putting two and two together, “Woah...so you...” Suddenly, he understood why Tubbo gave him the journal.

“Do...you think you can help me with something?”

Niki nodded, coming a bit closer as Tommy flipped open the book.

“Read from the beginning. See if it helps you with anything...”

=x=

There was a loud pounding at his door that woke him, eyes fluttering open slowly as they adjusted to the darkness of the room.

“Wha...?”

He had a massive headache and the pounding at his door never ceased- much to his irritation, “Yea yea, i’m coming!!” He called out, swinging his legs out of the bed as he stood. He quickly grabbed his shirt, slipping it on as his wings pushed through the small holes. He mumbled nonsense, his head foggy as he rubbed his eyes and opened the door.

To his surprise, he was met with angry faces and the sight of torches.

“Can...I help you?” He asked in confusion. It was the middle of the night, why had these people come to his door?

“That's the witch!”

The noirette’s stomach dropped as he heard the accusation, skin paling, “Wait- wait wha-” He yelped as two men stormed into his house, grabbing him by his arms and dragging him out of his house. He kicked and struggled, screaming for an explanation as he watched a mob ransack his small home. He shook with fear and grief, unable to comprehend what was happening as the two men held him back. Item after item was brought out and piled as evidence of the accusations against him, leaving him speechless until the torches were thrown into the old wood hut.

It took minutes for the fire to consume his home, the mob forcing him to watch as it burned to the

ground. His body went numb from the cold, and his mind shut down as he was dragged off. He didn't register the short journey, but soon he was thrown into a cell and the iron doors were slammed shut. The air was stale and his heart pounded as he laid on the ground. What had just happened? Less than an hour ago, he had been sleeping peacefully in bed in his broken down house after a decently good day.

Then a mob comes to his door, accuses him of witchcraft without letting him defend himself and...

What would happen to him now?

He reached for the bars, only to immediately flinch back as the iron burned him. He couldn't even use his powers to escape- he was doomed...

The man scooted back against the wall, curling in himself as he found himself helpless in the situation. Not a single person could change a mob's mentality, and even if they heard him out they likely would call him a liar. Tears slipped down his face, cold eating him to his bones as he resigned himself to his fate.

After all, if he couldn't save himself, who could?

Chapter End Notes

~Lore~

I swear, we will get back to the others for chapter 23 or 24 there's just a lot having to happen rn woiefjae

Purple Hyacinth & Rhododendron

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

TW this chapter for mentions of poisoning, mentions of slavery, and mild gore.

This is fun chapter folks <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He's tired, muscles aching and throat parched from a long days work. So of course he goes to the well. Of course he pulls up the bucket and takes a handful of water, tilting his head up as he drinks. He doesn't think of it, the water refreshing as always. He picks up the bucket, brings it home to refill the cows water trough. He sees his mother conversing with one of those human sailors- it's her duty as leader- and he only smiles, waving to them before carrying on with his day. He passes other human sailors- simply visitors- walking around the village with smiling faces. He only sees one man without a smile, and it's then that he feels like something is off. His tail swishes behind him, ear flicking as he tilts his head. This man has a dark expression, and when their eyes meet there's underlying guilt clear and endless sorrow out in the open.

He offers the man a flower. The man smiles graciously and takes the flower, but that smile doesn't reach his eyes.

Day in, and day out, he sees that man. Everyday that man looks more and more sad and guilty, and he can't help but wonder why.

So every day, he brings that man another flower- hoping one day that smile will be genuine. He never succeeds.

Days pass, blending together.

The humans leave, moving to the next settlement over.

His family members grow ill, and so do the rest of his village. Their crops and animals become harder to tend to, the elderly and the newborns drop like flies...

The meat is found tainted and their crops are infested.

He wakes up in the middle of the night with abdominal pain and finds himself vomiting everything he eats. He no longer trusts any of the village products, and scours the nearby forest for wild berries while drinking stream water instead. Eventually, he starts to get better.

His people do not.

There's a desperate search for the cause of this, chaos caused, public uproars, and his people are left weak, defenseless, and turning on eachother.

Then it happens.

Then, came the attack that nobody prepared for.

An attack that turned his entire, peaceful little life around.

He can hear the cries of children and families- lovers and married couples savagely separated, any elderly left slain...the only ones spared were the young ones- the youngest being the newborns, and the eldest being around their 20's- and the pregnant.

He'd never seen so much blood spilled onto the dirt and cobble path's he'd walked all his life, nor had he seen so much smoke in the once clear sky that it blotted out the sun.

He'd never heard so many wailing newborns at once, nor the deafening dying out screams of innocents ringing in the night, or the echoing cannon fire of ships that rained death and tore through even the strongest of their buildings, or the piercing gun shots that tore through flesh and bone.

He'd never felt such a wide range of emotions at once, deep terror, intense gut wrenching agony, helplessness, grief and mourning, and most of all, blinding rage and hatred.

His skin felt like it was sweltering in the heat of the fires, adrenaline coursing through his system, firm-footed and yet feeling like his legs might give out on him at any moment.

Then, a man in a uniform is grabbing him. He yowls, using his nails to claw and fight, and gets a solid scratch across the man's face. He's thrown to the ground quickly and roughly as the man cries out, blood seeping from the wound. He curses at him as he remains frozen with fear, his eyes turning to him blazing with hate. The man raises his gun, hand shaking in fury as his teeth are barred.

A shot goes off making him flinch, but it barely grazes his feline ear, making him flinch in pain. Looking up, he's horrified to see the man with a sabre plunged through his chest. Pushed to the side, his scared gaze meets familiar eyes.

Eyes full of underlying guilt and endless sorrow.

The two hold their gaze for several moments, his breath held, awaiting death...and it dawns on him. This man knew of the attack and was one of them, and yet he was saving him. Suddenly, there is a shout and the man looks around quickly and anxiously, before mouthing to him one word he'll never forget.

'Run . '

He all but scrambles away, breaking into a sprint for dear life as his heart thundered and he silently thanked Xisuma for this second chance of escape. Once he was past the treeline, he heard the man call to his fellow soldiers. It grew darker the deeper into the jungle he'd gotten, the yells and calls of the soldiers never leaving earshot as he pushed his way through the thick brush.

Then suddenly, a large net nabs him. It pushes him to the cold, muddy jungle floor and he squirms and struggles, yowling and screaming. He tries to cut the rope with his claws, but it's far too thick and it only hurts him.

He sobs and pleads for freedom, and it isn't long till torchlight comes into vision, followed by the cocky taunts of the soldiers.

He feels humiliated and terrified as they stand over him, tensed like a frightened animal with wide, glassy eyes. Then, one of them sneers, lifting the butt of his gun and smashing it into the back of his head.

The first hit doesn't knock him out, but pain surges through his skull as he gasps out sobs. The man doesn't hesitate before bringing back the weapon again, and this time, it does the job, the entire world spinning as his vision goes pitch black.

Ant woke with a gasp, the sudden feeling of needing to hurl overpowering him as he scrambles out of the room, down the hall, up to the deck and grasps the rail for dear life as he heaved over the side of the boat. He only feels nauseous, his abdomen aching as he continues until there's nothing left in his stomach, then dry heaves a few times after.

His legs are weak after, shaking as he releases a few sobs and lets himself slip to his knees. He hated this, but it was a long term after effect he had to deal with now. A sick reality.

“Hey...”

There's a soothing hand that wraps around his midsection, pulling him closer to a much larger, solid and warm body. He leans into the warmth, whimpering as his hand leaves the rail to grip the man's shirt, claws snagging the fabric. The person makes a small sound at him, coaxing as he feels something being pressed to his lips. He parted them only slightly, feeling fresh, cool water slipping into his mouth, down his burning throat, and washing the taste of bile from his mouth. However, it's quickly taken away and he whines pathetically, eyes blurring with tears.

“Everything is alright. I've got you...”

The water is brought back, still in slow streams to ensure he doesn't end up throwing it up again, and eventually he lets go of the man's shirt to instead grab at the glass. He chugs it down quickly, some dripping down the side of his face and down his neck.

When it's gone, he takes a second to breathe, before gently the man's other hand is in his hair and scratching behind his ears tenderly, “Feel a bit better now?”

“A...a bit...” He manages to croak in reply, voice shaky and hoarse. His head finally clearer, he registers that it's Sam who's come to his aid- of course it was Sam, who else?- and the other man is still hugging him comfortingly and close.

“Do you need more water? It's only been...around maybe two weeks, so there is likely to still be lots of arsenic in your system...”

Two weeks.

It had only been around two weeks since Ant had last drank the water in the village well. He was fortunate to even be alive, as according to Sam he'd ingested a lethal amount of arsenic from the well water. It had been poisoned as to weaken the village forces without them knowing, and it was lucky that his body built up a resistance and he eventually decided to drink stream water instead. It would take him years before it would fully leave his system, so until then, he just had to deal with the sickness it brought and thank Xisuma he was still alive against the odds.

Ant whined, burying his face in Sam's shoulder, “Mmm...yes please...” He still felt slightly dizzy, the gentle rocking of the boat not helping much with his condition.

The taller man helps him to stand slowly, leading him below deck to the kitchen again. The clothes he's wearing scratch his skin uncomfortable, rough from grime, sweat, and salt water...he's thankful he'll be getting new clothes in the morning- what were city clothes like? The ones they made in his village were soft and smooth, but they couldn't compare to clothes in the city, tailored to perfection for a price, pressed and fine...could they?

That was one thing he was looking forward to. The Captain was kind to let them stay for now, and both him and Sam had an inclination to stay for good- after all, this could be an adventure, and Ant always did want to explore the world.

As he watched Sam pour another glass of water, Ant dreamt of the things he might see some day. How many places could he visit, how many wonders could he see- they were already heading to the Championship, and that was astonishing enough.

An invitation to watch the Championship was enough to make someone want to faint, but an invitation to participate? That was only something those of high status and high skill received, as the festive god only took the best of the best for the greatest entertainment...

He never believed he'd be able to see it before, but now...

Gods, there was no need to look at the sadness in the past- this was the present and going forward he had so much ahead of him. Now, he had Sam, and against all odds he was alive and he was going to see the Championship. He'd suffered, and now it was time for him to heal.

Despite everything- the death, the sickness, the near enslavement...
Ant was just happy to be alive.

=x=

The candle-light was dim in the pitch black room, deep breaths taken as he fiddled with the quill in his hand. It wasn't enough light, but with George asleep not that far away, he didn't dare to make it any brighter for fear of waking the sleeping prince. Ink stained its tip as he quietly mourned his lack of words, and eventually he placed it back in the inkwell and sat back.

What could he tell George? He couldn't lie to him, and he knew he'd find out eventually...

Oh woe is the heart of a young man caught between a rock and a hard place.

Dream moves to stand, boots quiet on the wood planks as he makes his way to the bed. There really is only one choice that gives the best- albeit not the most favorable- outcome.

"George?" He shakes the other man awake gently, chuckling at the soft whine from him, "C'mon, I...I have to tell you something."

George groaned as slowly sat up, stretching a bit before leaning forward against Dream, "What is it?"

Dream gave a sad smile, hand snaking to grip George's and intertwining their fingers, "I..." There was a moment of silence as Dream tried to make out the words in his head, mouth opening and closing like a fish. This would be the only chance he'd get now...

"George I...It's not the most reliable source, but...uh...um..." He swallowed, his mouth suddenly dry and a lump forming in his throat, "I...heard from someone about a situation going on in Donadim."

A flash of concern crossed George's face, eyes widening, "My...home? What..." Dream gripped the prince's hand a little tighter, biting his lip as suddenly he wanted to back out and lie.

He tried to, "George it- it's about your parents they..." He didn't succeed. A curse of being a faerie; the inability to lie, even if he wanted to. His eyes met the brunettes, seeing realization and horror dawn on his face, "Your father apparently was wounded during the bust at the wedding and he died from his wounds days later. Your mom...she just appeared to have dropped dead."

George's eyes became glassy as he listened, seeming at a loss for words as he tried to search for any hint of humor in Dream's face, "I..."

"I'm...I'm so sorry George..."

The younger man's eyes downcasted, tears brimming his eyes and slowly slipping down his face as he processed the words. Dead. His parents were dead.

"I...it's my fault..."

Dream straightened immediately, eyes wide, "Hey- no-" He scooted closer and wrapped his arms around the brunette, tucking his head under his chin. The prince hugged back tightly, whimpering

before letting out short sobs. He had never had much love for his parents, but that didn't make their deaths hit any less hard. It stung deeply and felt unreal, heart twisting. Dream spoke in a hushed, comforting tone, "It's not your fault. You're not at fault, because..."

'Because it was me who decided to release the prisoners as a distraction, causing your father to get wounded.' Dream thought with slight bitterness, but decided against saying it.

"Because you just wanted to be free, and that isn't a crime. It...it's nobody's fault, okay?"

George didn't respond, soft sobs growing into quiet, muffled wails leaving him as he buried his face in Dream's shoulder, fingers digging into the cloth of his back. The faerie felt his tears soak through his shirt, but paid it no mind. This was George's time to grieve, and he would let him.

=x=

None of the three adults could sleep, so they merely sat on guard around the fire, chatting idly as the moon slowly passed over the sky. Slime sat with a blanket wrapped around his shoulders, eyes tired. Him and Schlatt's conversation had left him with a pit in his stomach, mostly asking each other questions of the others' experience. Eventually, they had decided to join Cap by the fire- something the older man appreciated, "What...happened after I...?"

Schlatt snorted, "Slime, buddy, if you want to hear about the others you could just ask." The other man chuckled nervously before clearing his throat, "Then...yea...please..."

The ex-hunters tone took a gentle shift, "Well...where to start..." He thought for a second, "Well, You probably wanna know about Grizz and Condi first, right?"

A gentle nod answered him.

"Grizz and Condi escaped with the help of a fisherman named Bizly, and later after the rebellion I saw them again when travelling to find a home. They were doing good for themselves- settled down in a friendly, quiet village by the coast and I got to meet Bizly for myself- chill guy, really- and I think the three of them are in a relationship of sorts? Not sure, but they seemed content and happy together. Oh- Grizz finally got to have a bunch of dogs too."

Slime's heart both ached and lifted. He was glad they were alive and well, but it still stung to know that he missed the chance to be there with them. He missed them dearly, but at the end of the day, he didn't want to stir up old memories by just showing up when they thought he was dead.

"Traves and Cooper went off in their own direction, and the last letter I got from them said they settled on living in their own little cottage by a lagoon, isolated from anybody ever bothering them again."

Slime smiled at that- things changed, but Traves and Cooper's bond always remained the constant. Nothing could get between those two, and he only wished them the best.

"Josh went to continue the guild. He's by himself I think, and I haven't heard much from him since so- sorry...Noah went to travel the world- said he wanted to live life to its fullest and keep moving forward. I get paintings and letters from him in the post, about his adventures and journeys sometimes."

Two free spirits. Josh had his own way of coping and mourning, and Noah was always a bit stoic and quiet. Noah's way seemed to be a more poetic way of coping, and well- it seemed thankfully happy enough.

"And...I think that's it."

Slime's eyes shot up, looking at Schlatt in surprise, "That's it? What do you mean?" The other man stared back in a mildly confused manner, "It- just means that's it?"

"But- no- wha- what-"

Slime felt a deep sting as his stomach twisted, “B-but-”

“Slime? What's wrong?”

“H-how could you forget him?! Why am I the only one who ever remembers him?!” Schlatt’s eyes widened as he took in the sudden anguish in his companions eyes. Cap spoke up, getting up,

“Slime, your wounds- you shouldn’t strain yourself-”

“But-”

He whimpered as Cap coaxed him to sit down, wincing as he finally registered the pain in his side. Slime looked at Schlatt again, voice slightly strained and desperate, “Schlatt- please, I need to know what happened to Ted- you have to know something-”

Realization dawned on his face and Schlatt inwardly cursed at himself. It was getting so hard to remember their demon friend nowadays, and he was honestly shocked that Slime himself remembered.

Well- not really. He’d always suspected there was something...off between the two. It wasn’t like there was anything obvious, but there was a clear connection between them that wasn’t felt with the rest. Perhaps it was just their differing chaotic nature, their shared woes of being never-aging beings, or just the fact that they brought something out of each other that wasn’t there around everybody else.

“Ted...Slime i’m...i’m sorry but after everything Ted just...disappeared. I haven’t heard a thing from him- none of us really have...”

Slime’s eyes were glassy as he spoke, voice cracking, “O-oh...thats...” He took a breath and nodded slowly. He hung his head, pulling the blanket over himself. Cap gave him a sympathetic look to the immortal, “I take it you and this Ted were close...”

“You...you could say that...”

The noirette put a hand on his back and rubbed gently, “I can relate in a sense. I’m looking for my best friend right now- we were attacked and he was taken from me years back. I...I don’t even know where he is or if he’s alive...I just know I have to find him...” The Captain's eyes filled with grief as Slime lifted his head to listen, “It feels like he was there one moment and gone the next. He’s everything to me- so I have to know, or I’ll feel nothing but grief for the rest of my life.”

The immortal nodded solemnly, “Yea it’s...it’s kinda like that...” He hesitated, “What...what was his name?”

Cap smiled sadly, “X33n.”

Schlatt watched with sad eyes, feeling deep sorrow for the two men. Neither had any closure they needed, and to them it felt agonizing. He couldn’t imagine being forced to live like that- he was sure he’d die.

So in his eyes, no matter how many monsters he’d slain, no matter how much he’d survived, and although he’d never say it outloud...

These two men were stronger than he could ever be.

=x=

When Tubbo opened his eyes, he was somewhere else entirely.

The land was vast, with seemingly nothing for miles- except for a structure that surrounded him. There was the smell of rot in the air, and he couldn’t see his feet on the ground due to a thick, dark mist that went to his knees.

Three tall towers stood on each side of him. To his left, one made of quartz and obsidian, and

someone he didn't know stood staring right back at him with the same shocked and confused expression, "Hel...lo?" He spoke, voice pleasant to the ears.

"I...hi?" Tubbo replied, and the man was surprised by the response, "Who are you?"

"I'm Tubbo-"

The shorter walked closer, and he could make out this man wore the clothing of someone of high-end upbringing. His hair was dirty blonde, but his facial features were blurred- he towered over Tubbo, even more so than Tommy or Schlatt or the Captain did.

"A...am I dreaming?"

"I think so...?"

There was a noise behind him, and the man gasped quietly. Tubbo turned, seeing a large wall of crystal behind him, glittering and faintly glowing.

But...that wasn't what he focused on.

He stared at his own reflection with shock, unable to recognize who stood before him, "I-is...this a mirror?" His voice shook, heart racing as the man didn't respond, only slowly edging towards the crystal with his gaze fixed on his own reflection, "It can't be..."

The other version of him had his hair grown past his waist, with glowing white irises and void black sclera. His hands and forearms looked like they were dipped in black paint, a deep black creeping up his arms and eyes dusted in grey with his veins black. His clothes were a deep navy blue stained by crimson red blood, and tattered with deep scratches and bites covering his form. He looked like he'd been mauled by a monster of sorts, covered in bruises and gashes- but something deep within told him whatever did that was far from natural.

The alternate version of him copied his every move, and when he opened his mouth deep red blood trickled past his lips.

"What is this...wha-" Tubbo heard whispers of disbelief followed by the sound of glass being scratched. He looked at the stranger as he let out a scream, quickly scrambling back from his own reflection, "No- stay away from me!!"

Tubbo looked at the man's reflection, and suddenly understood his fear.

What stood in the reflection was the thing of nightmares, eyes piercing as they locked onto the poor man. Mismatched glowing eyes stood out against a splattered canvas of black and white, sickly thin to the point where he could count each rib in its torso. Its hands were large and boney with claws that looked like they were made to maul and claw and drool dripped past impossibly sharp teeth that looked like they were made to rip and tear through even the toughest armor. It stood hunched with bumps of its spines, standing on tiptoes as it scratched its claws against the mirror- managing to make actual claw marks on the smooth crystal surface. Unlike Tubbo's, this one didn't flow the man's movements- only seeming to be seeking escape. Tubbo tore his eyes away and ran to the man. He reached out one hand and put it on his shoulder, only to feel sudden electricity shocking him.

There was a screech and he looked to the reflection again, watching in shock to see his reflection moving on its own and struggling with the creature. The wounds were gone, but he looked terrified and in agony.

A glowing chain wrapped around his reflections forearm and hand connected to a thick golden collar around the creature's neck. The creature screamed and struggled as his reflection pulled the chain taut, keeping it from reaching a new figure that was made of golden flames. It seemed to be trying to kill the figure, elongated arm stretched out, teeth bared, and claws swiping at it.

Then, within seconds, it turned on his reflection. It gave an ear piercing shriek before the creature ran at him and blood splattered as his own agonized cries echoed in the endless lands.

Before he could see the end, the crystals cracked down the center and the images went away. What

replaced them was a message written in blood, in language Tubbo didn't know.

“O vae qui faciunt iniuriam electio est, existimans se posse domare, quod non potest esse tamed potius quam amicus bestia, tenetur ad eos.

Idea, quod unum potest regere alio modo, quia mille annorum fabulam ita dixit - quid inepta est.

Iniuriam electiones potest, mitte te deorsum via corruptionis, o puer de luna. Facere ius ones, et vos may iustus habere forte non solum tibi, sed et aliis.”

“What...do you think that was...” He asked, but he received no reply. Looking beside him, he was surprised to see that the stranger was gone. Tubbo looked around frantically with no sign of the man, but to no avail.

The wind suddenly picked up, the mists at his feet swirling until he was enveloped in darkness.

Tubbo's eyes fluttered open, and he looked to see he was curled against Tommy's side, the other's arm draped around him. He heard the adults outside conversing quietly, and crickets were singing songs in the deep night.

The golden blonde was deep asleep, open journal in his hand. His body was pleasantly warm, and with a yawn the boy found himself falling asleep again. He didn't let the dream bother him- it was just a dream after all. He'd just tell Tommy about it tomorrow.

=x=

Far away, a young man woke with a start. His heart was pounding in his chest, blood rushing in his eyes and body in a cold sweat. He sat up and ran his hand through his hair, taking deep breaths as he tried to remember the details of the nightmare.

However, his memory struggled.

A boy around his age, markings on skin, reflection's, a monster...

What else?

...

He...didn't remember. He couldn't even recollect that boy's name, much less anything else.

With a deep sigh, he laid down again, draping an arm over his eyes. He'd try again in the morning- it was too late for this, and maybe even his mother would have answers.

After all, she probably knew more about those moon markings on the boy's arm than he did.

Chapter End Notes

If it isn't clear now, from this point forward I'm not gonna be mentioning Carson. I hope you all understand and enjoyed the chapter <3

Ferns, Purple Hyacinth, & Hibiscus

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

New! I finally have gotten around to getting used to instagram, so any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on there now! The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, and my @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

And with that, Enjoy the chapter!!! <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was a brief knock on the side of the wagon that startled Tommy awake, in turn shaking Tubbo awake as well.

"Rise and shine boys, we have work to do today!" The pale blonde whined softly, nuzzling further into Tommy's side with a quiet murmur of "5 more minutes" as the other gave a fond eye-roll. He squirmed free with a playful sneer, "Gods, you are so fuckin' clingy I swear-"

"You're waaarrmmm..."

"Yea, and you're draining my body heat, so get offa' me dickhead."

He finally got free and stood up, brushing himself off as the other finally rose reluctantly, pouting. Tommy pulled off the cape from before, folding it neatly, and putting it in the corner of the wagon by their possessions for safekeeping. Tubbo grabbed a small pouch of their coins from among the belongings and together the two hopped out of the wagon, seeing the adults getting ready.

Slime still sat by the long burnt-out fire, looking at them and giving a small, weak smile and wave. They waved back, and soon Schlatt spoke up, "Good, you two are up. Slime's gonna stay and watch the horses while we're in town, and I have another thing to ask of you guys." He walked over, tone shifting to something a bit more serious, "This town isn't a friendly one." He gave Tubbo a glance and his nose scrunched up a bit waving the teen over, much to their confusion. Tubbo shrugged, walking over and turning his back to the older man as he gestured.

"As much as possible, if you guys separate from me, try not to look like easy targets and keep a tight hand on your coin purse. There are purse thieves everywhere- same thing with thugs and just-bitches and assholes alike in general," He took out the enchanted hairpin and untied the teen's hair as he spoke, eyes focused. Carefully, he moved his hair so that it went over-top of Tubbo's ears, covering them. Schlatt then tied together the ends loosely, before turning Tubbo towards him again, pushing his bangs so that they were out of his eyes, and pinned them loosely with the

hairpin. He patted the teen's shoulders with a seemingly relieved smile, standing straight again and letting him go, "I want you two to stick together as much as possible, okay? Keep a vigilant eye, and if anything goes wrong then try your best to find me or Cap. That clear?"

The two looked between each other before Tommy rolled his eyes again, grinning cockily, "Me and Tubs can handle ourselves just fine, but sure."

Schlatt gave a slight snicker at the teen's pride, before turning to Cap, who had just finished getting ready.

"All set?"

"You betcha'!" The noirette answered cheerily. Schlatt smiled, "Right, then let's get going, shall we?"

=x=

Sapnap ran his fingers through his hair a few times, taking a glance at his reflection once more in a shined silver platter sitting in a market stall as he fussed over his appearance. He'd never felt so anxious about seeing someone, and briefly, he wonders if he should have worn something nicer. Something more eye-pleasing than just his usual clothes.

"Sapnap!"

There's an excited call of his name and as he turns, he suddenly wishes he *had* worn something nicer. Karl's wearing something entirely different from yesterday; black high waisted pants with suspenders, a purple silk vest with a magenta silk ruff, rose gold bands around his biceps holding up sheer, mismatched, fingerless gloves that were bright blue and magenta, with a single earring with a citrus orange teardrop gem. Sapnap gawked for a few moments before shaking himself out of it, chuckling as his face heated up, "Karl! I'm...I feel rather silly now. You look really nice..."

The brunette's cheeks turned pink and he snickered, "Ah- these are just my casual clothes actually...Y-you look nice too!" He chirped, Sapnap relaxed a bit at that, a bit relieved. He looked around before clearing his throat and giving a flourish of his hand, bowing a bit as if mocking royalty and looking up at the other man. "So, shall we?"

Karl seemed a bit surprised, blinking a few times before his eyes lit up in excitement, taking Sapnap's hand eagerly with a beaming smile that nearly shot the incubus dead, "Y...yea!" The pair began walking hand and hand, the grip loose and light as if both sides were hesitant to hold on too tight.

Sapnap felt like his stomach doing flips with both nervousness and excitement, and it was almost reminiscent of being a little kid again. Briefly, he remembers the first time he felt like this- the memory was distant, but still cherished and fond to him.

"You're so slow Sappy!" The young girl's voice rang out in the vast valley, echoing as Sapnap sprinted after her. He panted heavily, exhausted by the run as he finally reached the Oak tree. Collapsing on his back as his chest rose and fell with his breath. She laughed lightly, looking down at the boy with a teasing smile, "You're four seconds past your record~"

Sapnap groaned loudly, prompting the girl to start laughing, "Aww don't give up now, you aren't terribly far off. I'm sure you'll get an even better record eventually."

"Nnnnnoooo...."

She rolled her eyes, giggling, and for a second he swore he heard her soft laughter through the rustle of oak leaves.

"Stop making fun of mmmeeee..." He whined, pouting a bit. The girl smiled widely, "No, I don't think I will." She knelt down, bending down to press a featherlight kiss to Sapnap's forehead, and he felt his face grow impossibly hot, "Your cute when you're all huffy."

There it was.

That feeling of his stomach filling with butterflies and heart skipping a beat- something he'd cherish forever.

Something he'd never forget, even if she was long gone. Clearing his throat again, Sapnap spoke slowly, "So uh...i'll admit, I don't really know much around here so..." He chuckled shakily, feeling suddenly sheepish, "I...I don't really know where we could go for our date aside from town square

for dancing."

Karl snorted, grinning, "You're fine...The dances don't start till near sunset, I can start by showing you around town if you'd like?"

"That would be fantastic..." The incubus sighed in relief, smiling at the brunette gratefully before allowing him to pull him along, "C'mon, let's grab some sweet rolls first!"

=x=

It hadn't been long before the boys had wandered off from Schlatt and Cap, leaving the two to explore. Tommy and Tubbo kept a tight grip on each other's hands, making sure to keep in pace with each other while Tommy kept his free hand on their coin purse. It felt less...packed then they had expected, some of the stands being closed for the day.

Tubbo perked up as a mouth-watering scent filled the air, looking around as his stomach turned in hunger. He tugged Tommy's hand, getting the taller's attention, "Food. Food. Food. Food." He chanted with a lopsided grin, and Tommy wheezed a little before rolling his eyes, "Alright big man, cmon."

The two followed the scent, coming to a quaint looking shop made of spruce and oak. A few men and women were sitting at tables, and when looking over the counter they could see fresh buttered bread and steaming hot sausage rolls on wooden plates being prepared to be served. The aroma wafted out the door as it filled the shop, and while looking at what they assumed was the kitchen door a well-rounded middle-aged woman stepped out and rushed a cup of something to one of the tables.

They approached the counter and Tommy briefly let go of Tubbo's hand as the woman went behind the counter and towards them, giving them a rosy-cheeked smile. Her voice was strident and high-pitched as she spoke, "Oooohhh look at you two!! What can I get you little cuties?" She squealed, and Tommy outwardly winced as the sound pierced their ears. He cleared his voice, trying to be as polite as possible as he spoke, "How much is it for two-" Realizing his mistake, he backtracked a bit, "I mean- how much for *six* of those trays." The blonde gestured to the plates of food, and the woman let out a loud laugh, "Six?? Oh I know you boys are growing but a plate or two for each of you should be well enough!"

Tommy faltered. It was true- one plate was well enough for him, but not for Tubbo. For as long as

Tommy knew him, Tubbo had always seemingly had a bottomless stomach and needed to eat four times as much as him before he was full- and it wasn't like Tubbo was an over-eater or greedy either! He was still thinner than Tommy and quite a bit shorter, so it was a mystery where it went.

It was just another weird thing about his best friend that he had brushed off, just like the thing about his hair, eyes, and freckles glowing a bit in the dark. If Tommy just went along with the lady, then Tubbo would probably still be hungry after...

He inhaled deeply, trying his hand at pity, "Please ma'am, we're ever so hungry- we're jus' poor children who 'avent anybody to take care of us, see? All we 'ave is each other...We made a good sale an' today woulda' been our mum's birfin' day, so we 'oped to celebrate with the feast like we would 'ave when she was alive..." As much as he hated it, he made his voice unsteady and pitiful- making sure to almost play up his accent a slight bit. Where he normally pronounced his words, he slurred a bit or skipped a vowel- making himself seem like he lacked any sort of education. Sometimes, he did this just to annoy the ladies at the orphanage- as the improper pronunciation always seemed to irk them- but now, he was trying to use it to play up pity points. Tubbo- upon realizing what he was doing- played along, jutting out his lower lip and giving the woman puppy dog eyes.

Without much resistance or second thought, the woman gasped, fawning almost immediately, "Oh you poor little dears!!" She cried in exasperation, "I'm so sorry, you boys take a seat anywhere you like and i'll get six plates prepared for you and a basket to carry any extra leftovers." She fussed, shoos them gently as she headed back to the kitchen.

The pair looked at each other in astonishment before rushing to grab a table, and in shock Tommy whispered, "Holy fuck that actually *worked*? "

Tubbo nodded gleefully, holding back laughter, "It did! It did!!"

"That was the lamest lie I have ever told, what the *fuck* ." The pale blonde shrugged, practically bouncing in his seat, "Well it worked, and that's all that matters!"

Tommy flopped back in his seat, still in shock as they waited.

'There is no way someone is that dumb. This is a trap.'

But, as six plates arrived forty minutes later, hot, fresh, and steaming- he realized the people here

really just were that dumb.

=x=

Hours later, Sapnap had figured out so much about Karl that only made him more and more interested. For starters, he shared Sapnap's humor, he was as easy to talk to as he was on the eyes, he actually knew how to fight fairly well, he had the most infectious and amazing laugh Sapnap had ever heard, he was witty when he wanted to be, and he was just...perfect. In every single way, Karl was everything the incubus had ever hoped for- every new fact about him never ceases to surprise him.

Eventually, Karl had gotten on the subject of his yearly work. Surprisingly, making rock candy was just a thing he did for fun when the festival came around. What he *actually* worked as, was a clockmaker, and an apparently damned good one at that. At first, Sapnap had thought the guy was just trying to impress him, but upon entering his shop, it was clear he wasn't lying.

There was the soft ringing of a bell upon entering the shop, and immediately Sapnap was hit by the smell of lemon-scented wood polish, wood shavings, slight paint, and ink. There was a rhythmic ticking as every clock was synced, and there were all types of beautifully crafted clocks hanging on the walls, sitting on shelves, or just standing up against the wall. Karl looked oddly at home in this place, the bright colors of his clothing stood out against the darkened wood, turning to look at him while gesturing around, "Well? What do you think?"

Sapnap was in awe, walking over to a grandfather clock and touching the wood finish, tracing the grooves with astonishment as he remarked, "They all look so gorgeous...how long have you been doing this?"

"Well I mean- I started whittling wood when I was eight. I only started trying to play with gears and make clocks at twelve years old- with my dad's help, of course." Looking down, Karl chuckled, "Funny story- have you ever noticed I only have nine fingers?"

Sapnap's mind took a moment to process, snickering before stopping and doing a double take in surprise, "Wait- really?"

"Yep." The brunette popped the 'p', lifting his right hand to show that he was, indeed, missing his ring finger. It looked like it was severed clean off from just below the knuckle, but had healed nicely and was just a small stump now. Sapnap gaped and Karl continued, turning his palm

towards himself and touching the hand gently, "I lost it when I was...fourteen, I believe. My dad told me to stay put while he dealt with a customer, and we were working on a clock that was busted. It was a big one- like the grandfather clock in front of you- and he was trying to fix it, but didn't want my small fingers messing with it."

He gave Sapnap a shaky grin, "You can guess why, now. But back then well- I was dumb, and I wanted to prove to my dad I could do it." The noirette nodded in understanding- he remembered being like that with the Doctor. Young, stupid, unafraid, and wanting to prove he could do things the adults did. Karl continued, slightly wistful, "I had looked in the gears of the clock while my dad was talking to the customer- trying to figure out why the gears aren't turning- until I spotted something. I think it was a nail? Just- a small metal object was jamming the gears. Problem was, I had to jimmy it out with my finger- and, well, once I did- It was only a second of celebration before suddenly the gears turned quicker than I could pull out my finger and-" He made an exaggerated bone-crunching noise with his mouth and Sapnap winced, imagining it painfully.

However, Karl only seemed to shrug it off, "As you'd imagine, I was screaming like a banshee and my dad immediately came running- started crushing me out in a panic before helping me to yank my finger out. Thing was, it wasn't the gears that severed my finger- no. Called for a doctor, and it was determined that my finger was way too far gone for saving. The gears crushed the bones way too much. So we had two options- sever it just below where it's shattered, or try to set it, but there won't ever be functional use in it because it'll never properly heal. You can guess what I chose in the end."

The noirette waited a few before speaking up, "That...that's quite the story." Karl let out a small giggle, shrugged, "Ah, it's just another 'I was a stupid kid who got ahead of myself' story, honestly. But," He shrugged, "We all have plenty of those to tell, don't we...." Sapnap nodded absentmindedly, in pure awe as he looked at the grandfather clock once again.

The incubus admired the grandfather clock for a few moments more before turning to Karl, his expression open and honest, "You...you are such an...an amazing and talented person..."

Karl's heart did somersaults, face reddening as he shifted a bit shyly, "It's- it's really nothing...." Abruptly, he seemed to remember something, "Here- take a look at this, it's much more impressive!" He strode over, taking out the watch from his pocket, popping open the lid, and showing Sapnap. Looking at it, he could see the inside of the lid had various orange, blue, and purple swirls and designs, while the outside of the lid had a diamond centerpiece with a spiral of green growing from the center. It made a soft twinkling ticking noise as the hands moved, and with every tick he swore he felt his heart jump with it, "Woah..."

"Beautiful, ain't it?"

"Yea..."

Sapnap felt totally entranced by the watch- almost as if it was pulling him in- but quickly blinked as Karl snapped it shut again and pulled it against his chest. He seemed to be contemplating something, eyes searching the noirette with wariness and chewing his bottom lip. There was a sudden and deep conflict brewing in his eyes that took Sapnap aback, and the brunette tore from his gaze to look out the window briefly before meeting his eyes again.

His lips parted, but no voice came out- as if he was still hesitant- until he finally exhaled and spoke slowly, choosing his words carefully.

"Would you like to hear about what it does?" Karl started, only pausing briefly before continuing, "Like... *why* it's so special to me?"

There was a sudden aura of mystery around the watch, Sapnap suddenly filled with confusion as he thought to himself, 'It *does* something...?'. The words held much more power than they seemed. The idea that it did something- something that Karl was so *wary* about simply asking him- led to the implication that it was so much more than just a pocket watch, and that made him giddy.

If he didn't have it before, it was sure now that Karl had Sapnap's full interest. He felt like it was all too good to be true in just two days- cute, skillful, a good fighter, an amazing sense of humor, sweet, playful, and now even playing at an air of mystery around him. How could he get any better...

"I'd love to know- that is, if you're comfortable with telling me, that is." A large grin broke out across Karl's face as he nodded eagerly, letting out that same infectious giggle that had started to make Sapnap melt at the sound of, "I am. But you've gotta promise me that you won't tell anybody else, okay?"

The incubus nodded, "I promise- cross my heart."

Quickly, Karl strode forward and took his hand, tugging him back out of the shop, "Then come on- I know the perfect spot to give us full privacy *and* it's a gorgeous view."

=x=

The place that Dream had taken them was...interesting, to say the least. Ant had been forced away

from the others- same with Sam- due to being what the ladies had apparently called an 'emergency case.' This, according to Dream, meant they wanted to have him in privacy due to him needing a lot more tending to due to his current state of being. Considering that his "current state of being" was that his skin was covered in a thick layer of grime and oil and his hair was greasy and stiff from seawater after having not showered for two weeks- he supposed he didn't mind if they only meant well. Sam was dragged off for that same reason, and well- they *were* going to drag off Bad too, but after a quick clear up of his species, they were quick to understand and retrieve a cyan-blue pouch about the size of his hand. Ant heard the lady mention something about a special bathing pool for merfolk that allowed swimming in the room, as well as something about the bag, and Bad graciously accepted.

Sam gave him an assuring smile before he was led off by a young woman with fiery red curls, and Dream, George, Techno, and Bad did the same as they headed in an opposite hall following a middle-aged woman with brown hair. Slight paranoia and distrust took grip of him as he warily followed his own guide, his mind starting to imagine the worst- that this was a trap somehow and he was getting idiotic.

He was led away by a kind-looking elderly woman with salt and pepper hair, and he quietly made idle chit chat. He learned her name was Irene, and she had been working here for going on thirty years- seeming to enjoy working here, even with the occasional rude customer or two.

Soon, she stopped at a pinewood door, taking out a small key and unlocking the door and opening it for him. Stepping in, he immediately felt the room being comfortably warm, the far wall being an open view out onto an empty drop into thick tree tops. There was what looked to be a large basin built into the floor, filled with water so hot he could see steam rising from the top. Beside it, there was an assortment of different bottles and jars, all filled with various gels, liquids, and small pebbles, and all having special labels.

Irene spoke up pleasantly, "Just strip, put your clothes in the wicker basket, and slip into the water whenever you feel like it. I don't advise you open the jars though- not all of them will be pleasant for your use. Some are for rougher, tougher skinned species."

Ant's ears perked up at that, turning to her in slightly surprise, "Tougher skinned species...?" He tilted his head, and she let out a raspy laugh, "Oh you know, sweet pea! Demons, Half-gorgons, Nagas, Arachnes- all the like. If they're peaceful and just lookin' for a good cleaning, we cater 'em. If not, we boot their asses out ourselves!" Ant snickered at that, smiling a bit. He suddenly felt a bit more safer than before- giving Irene a gentle smile, "Ah- that's very kind of you."

The old woman smiled back, playfully waving him off, "It's just common human decency, deary. Now get yourself all stripped and sunk in that water- ya stink!" She gave another raspy laugh, "One of the girls will come by in a few to help scrub out the gunk in your hair with one of our special mixtures, got it?"

"Yes ma'am. Thank you."

"Don't mention it."

With that, she shut the door, leaving Ant alone once more. Happily, he quickly stripped and tossed his old clothes in the wicker basket. He dipped a foot in the water before slipping fully in- letting out a deep sigh as he slightly purred in contentment.

'Well...' He thought to himself as he sunk a bit deeper into the water, 'Maybe this isn't *that* bad...'

=x=

The peace and quiet was something Techno had greatly appreciated. The fresh open air, the view, the soft sounds of birds chirping- the all around peace that filled the room was perfect. Unlike Ant's room, Techno's area was more of just a room built around a hot spring, with three open walls overlooking the forest framed by arches and the hot spring instead encompassing around ninety percent of the room.

He'd been given complete privacy, allowed to lock his door after his clothes had been taken away to be tailored and washed. So as of now, he was simply basking in the peace, allowing the hot water to help loosen any knots and tenseness in his muscles, and listening to birds sing from an amazing view.

But that wasn't the best part, really. The best part was the fact that only just a bit below him and to the side were the mermaid bathing areas- and while sitting at the edge, he could see Bad simply just...playing around while in his siren form. Well- at least he *had* been. Child-like and innocent, he had just been splashing around, swimming a few laps, singing a little bit for a while- and the sight had managed to make him crack a smile.

Now, however, Techno simply watched with interest and curiosity. Now, Bad was seemingly performing care on his tail- the spines flared out and the scales seemed to tense up as he picked at certain areas with a sharpened piece of coral. His work seemed tedious, but even from where he was at Techno could see it did have results- there was a slight discoloration in the water as he picked away, resulting from what he suspected was perhaps dirt having built up under his scales.

Techno's eyes drifted to Bad's face- the siren's lips pressed in a thin line, brows pinched together, nose slightly scrunched up- it was easy to tell he was in complete focus. Techno stopped at his

eyes, and at that moment he realized that he'd never noticed how well the white of Bad's eyes popped out against the Paynes grey canvas of his skin. Briefly, he wondered if the blinding white of his eyes actually served a purpose in the water. If it made his eyes look even bigger than their already doe-eye'd shape- perhaps even bigger in deeper, darker waters-, so perhaps it was a defense of sorts? Protection through the intimidating illusion of looking bigger?

"I never took you as the voyeuristic type, Techno."

The war god jumped, slightly startled before recognizing the familiar cackle after the quip and growing slightly irritated from the sudden intrusion. He pulled his attention from Bad, turning to look at his intruder unamused, "Phil, another visit so soon? I thought you were busier than this."

"Well I mean, I *am* technically still on the clock right now, so to speak."

Techno raised a brow as the older man looked around with a hum before stepping towards one of the ledges, taking a breath of fresh air as he stretched out his skeletal wings. A light gust of wind traveled through the archway, and the air rushing past the wing bones made them rattle chillingly, and while the sound alone would make even the bravest man pale and fall to their knees in prayer, it only seemed to comfort Techno as a reminder of his oldest companion being nearby.

He remembers the first time he heard that rattle. Back then, it had been louder, and the bones constantly made cracking and popping noises when Phil moved them.

He narrowed his eyes at the stranger, hand still tight around his sword. Quickly bringing the sword up to the man's neck as he demanded again, "Who are you?!"

The man remained silent and unmoving in the wheatfield, not paying the sword any mind as he stared. It was a few tense moments before he spoke, but when he did Techno nearly felt his entire body run cold.

"Who I am does not matter. I've come to you with a warning."

Taking a breath, he forced himself to be brave, answering as firmly as possible, "And what might that be, hm?"

At that moment, he heard bones rattling, creaking and popping as the man slowly stretched them out large skeletal wings, eyes narrowing on his darkly, "Turn back. Go back to your home, and do not fall into temptation with whatever Keralis has promised you. In the end, you'll only be tricked."

Maybe if he had listened to Phil back then, he wouldn't be suffering now. Perhaps, sometimes, the all-knowing judge of death is right.

But in the end, his younger self was as bull-headed as usual- and simply told Phil to get out of his way.

He wished he hadn't.

That was then, though. Now, the rattle was softer and his wings moved silently, serving as a warning to whomever would listen- as unnerving as that was.

Looking into the man's eyes, Techno suddenly began to notice something was...off. There was more weariness there- exhaustion and deep sadness. Phil had something on his mind, and he wasn't telling him. Techno huffed, "Phil, if you have something to tell me-"

"I went to see Wilbur." Phil spat out the confession brusquely, the words making Techno's voice die in this throat. He looked at Phil with wide eyes, shocked to speechlessness as the judge seemingly refused to meet his gaze out of shame. The silence weighed on them heavily, the rest of the world seeming to drown out as there was now a heavy gloom hanging over the room.

Wilbur...

Techno stood at the edge of the village as he watched it burn, the smoke rising in plumes into the dark night sky as screams of agony were heard. He knew well enough that this wasn't something good. He knew damn well why this was happening, and he knew he could stop it.

However, the problem wasn't with that, but rather the simple fact that he just didn't care.

Standing in his true form for all to see, he slowly began to make his way towards and through the flaming village, hearing a familiar voice bellow through the night, "I want every last person gone! Clear it out!" followed by the heavy beat of his wings fanning the flames. It had been the violence that had drawn him here, and now, upon hearing the voice and the heavy wings, he now knew why.

Wilbur, and his little "pets".

Effortlessly, the harpy glided down and landed beside him, a wide, psychotic grin on his face, "Technoblade! How nice to see you..." He said curtly, slightly smug as he mock-bowed, "Though I mustn't say i'm surprised. Bloodshed is your thing now, isn't it?"

He lifted a single clawed hand, dark red blood glistening off it. Techno remained unamused, his eyes roaming over the village as if hoping to see something more interesting, "My 'thing' is war, pride, and rage. Not just bloodshed. It's the violence that beckoned me." He corrected in

annoyance. Wilbur prattled on about "same difference", but soon, Techno tuned him out.

It wasn't that he outwardly despised the Harpy, but his actions and claims often made himself out to be an annoyance. At the other side of town, Techno's eye's zeroed on someone running. It appeared to be one of Wilbur's pets, judging by horns sprouting out of their head- but instead of a sword, they were hugging something pretty large to their chest as they made a dash for the cover of the woods.

Silently, Techno contemplated alerting Wilbur- but as a second option...

Well, it wasn't really his business anyway.

Lifting his hand, Techno spoke again, "I think it's time for me to leave. There's nothing here worth my while."

Before the brunette could protest, he was gone- off to try and start a real war somewhere else.

Phil and Techno both knew Wilbur. Knew what he was capable of, knew what he was like, knew he had a tendency to be cruel and violent...

In the end, he brought his own downfall in the form of a riot, and for his cruelty, he was to be bound by chains till he perishes. Now those chains...

Those chains were made by Phil himself in hopes that he could contain Wilbur's magic- but the duty greatly pained him emotionally in the end, leaving him with immense grief. Seeing this, Techno and Phil made a decision never to see Wilbur.

But now...

"Phil, you-"

"I had to, Techno I- dammit-!" He hissed defensively before Techno could get more than two words out, turning towards him with slight desperation and pain in his eyes, "He's my *son*, Techno. No matter how many times he denies it, *I* am the one who found him when he was just a babe and did *everything* I could to raise him well- no matter what I do, my heart still agonizes that I have had

to be the one to forge the chains that leave him bound to the ground!" He spat, a sudden pit forming in his stomach as he let it spill out, "It is *my* magic sealing his fate. Don't you see, Techno? Even with my intentions being good, in his eyes I've betrayed him and it's all I've thought about- I had to see him, I had to try, I had to look him in the eyes and- and tell him I-" He teetered off, a bit shaky on his words, "I just...I wanted him to know I was sorry. Sorry for everything- because hell if I know how I fucked up parenting this bad..."

There was no peace in the room as Phil let out stuttered breaths, continuing shortly, "But he...he didn't even want to hear a word. He screamed at me to get out, so I did and I...I sought closure in a spur of emotion, Techno, and now I only feel like more of a monster than before." The blonde's face was reddened and his eyes were glassy- as if holding back tears.

Techno remained silent, not knowing what to say. He was sure he couldn't know how Phil felt, but for a moment he *tried*.

He tried to imagine the agony in his heart. Tried to imagine the suffering he felt. Tried to empathize and give comfort- which, in his defense, was hard to do when he was sitting in a hot spring and couldn't even try to get out and change because his clothes were still being washed- but he still *tried*.

In the end, Techno only knew one thing about how Phil felt. He felt like he was a monster, and that was one feeling Techno could share. However, no matter how he tried to comfort Phil, it didn't work- only succeeding to make himself look sheepish- and eventually, Phil recovered himself- gathering his composure once more. He took deep breaths, gave Techno an appreciative glance, and shook his head, "I...I'm sorry. That isn't- that wasn't at all what I needed to tell you mate. I just got a bit lost in my own head and the words started spillin' out, forgive..."

Techno nodded and Phil cleared his throat, "It's- well, what I needed to tell you...When I was Wilbur he- do you know those extra, thicker shackles I made in case one day the chains started rusting away? While I was there- I noticed that they seemed to have replaced only one of the old shackles and chains- and I can only assume that means.."

"He somehow managed to break one of the chains..." Techno continued for Phil, growling under his breath. Phil held up a finger, " *Or* that somebody helped him."

'Right', Techno thought, 'Can't forget that either.'

"Let me know if there's any developments. This...this could be an issue."

The blonde nodded, and suddenly the soft sound of a bell rang through the air, "Ah...that's my cue to leave."

Techno hummed, "Till next time."

"Till next time..." Phil tipped his hat, before stopping suddenly, "Oh and Techno- it might do your mind some good to stop thinking of things as being purely for battle or defense for a moment, and rather just enjoy their beauty for that alone."

Techno grew confused, but there was barely a sound as Phil departed, but as soon as he did it felt the weight lifted from the room again. Sighing, he laid back again. Lolling his head to the side, he saw Bad being nearly finished with his tail, and for some reason the sight of the content siren made him relax once more.

He ended up focusing on his eyes again, and as he looked down at the siren's face he suddenly remembered what Phil said.

'Stop thinking of things as being purely for battle or defense for a moment, and rather just enjoy their beauty for that alone.'

Sighing, he stared at Bad's face again- pushing his mind from any thoughts of battle.

A few moments later, he grew a soft smile.

Because Bad had never looked prettier than when Techno merely saw him as himself.

Chapter End Notes

Nobody:

Phil: *has a mental breakdown*

Also Phil, a few minutes later: Anyway...

Ferns, Black-eyed Susan, Bittersweet, & Aloe

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

New! I finally have gotten around to getting used to instagram, so any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on there now! The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, and my @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

And with that, Enjoy the chapter!!! <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When they got to the spot, Karl couldn't stop talking. It was like he was bursting with this information and it seemed like he'd never told it to anyone before, "It was a gift from my cousin. He knows about my clock business and magic use, and this baby-" Karl tossed the pocket watch from one hand to the other gently, the chain making a soft jiggling noise, "Was a peace gift from another kingdom. Nobody could figure what it did out, but it was supposedly powerful, real old, and busted. So B-man sent it my way to fix, giving me a little challenge. If I could figure out what it did, it was mine."

"And...?" Sapnap drawled, listening closely in amusement as Karl spoke, "*Well* , of course when I saw it I fell in love with it! I mean- it's such an intricate piece and the craftsmanship was amazing, even if it was broken. I spent so many moons trying to fix it, until one day- it finally worked! It began ticking away like a melody~! So *that's* when I finally started trying to figure out what it did." The shorter grinned, spinning around, "And let me tell you, combined with my magic? This thing is crazy."

Sapnap snorted, rolling his eyes, "I doubt it's *that* exciting."

"Ohhoho, wanna bet handsome?" Karl chuckled, taunting before he tossed it in the air. His eyes flashed orange and purple, those same colors along with bright blue swirling at his feet and around the pocket watch's chain as it popped open and floated in his hand. He looked back at Sapnap, expression softening as the sunset painted a canvas with soft pink, yellow, orange and red behind him. Sapnap's heart skipped as his eyes met the clock-maker's, in sudden awe by the pure wonderment sparkling in his eyes, "I don't even know the full extent of this thing's abilities, and I've had it for years Sapnap. I know it's main function though...and that's to manipulate the passage of time itself."

Sapnap's eyes widened at that, jaw falling open, " *Time?* Your saying that that thing can manipulate

the passage of *time?!'*" He cried, and instantly earned bubbling laughter from Karl, "I know, unbelievable right!"

"No- you've got to be messing with me!"

"I'm not! i'm not!"

"Prove it!"

Karl pouted, "Sapnap, time isn't something you can recklessly mess with- I can't just prove it like that." The noirette paused before sighing, "I...guess you've got a point there. Sorry..." Karl smiled a bit, and suddenly the music from town started faintly in the distance, "You're fine. However..." He reached out, shutting the compass and slipping it in his pocket before taking Sapnap's hand, "Somebody promised me a dance~ So, since we're a bit far from town, how about we just have that dance right here, hm?"

Every thought of the watch left Sapnap's mind as he lit up, unable to stop a gleeful smile as he took in the gorgeous man before him. He stood, pulling him in and pressing a kiss to the others cheek, "Sounds a hell of a lot more romantic, magic man."

Karl threw his head back with a laugh, and with that, the two danced and played, bathed in the glow of the sunset and only the sounds of their own laughter in the warm air.

=x=

As night fell, Big Q paced the cell. He'd done all he could- prayed to Xisuma, Amusix, and even Keralis to have him rescued, attempted to bribe the guard, tried to steal the keys...but now, as the sun set and the moon rose, he knew he was going to be forced to face the stone-cold fist of judgment.

Accepting his fate, the noirette decided to make one last attempt to at the very least save his own soul.

He sat on his knees and painfully stretched out his wings, reaching and plucking a single feather with a wince. He slipped off the only silver ring he had and he laid both on the dirt floor, taking a

deep breath as he spoke shakily, eyes shutting.

"Oh judge of Keralis, I implore you to hear my words..."

He could feel the guards' glares boring into his back and ignored them, "I have no money to offer- not jewel nor food- but I know I am to die painfully by the strike of midnight at the hands of accusers for a crime I have not committed. I offer you a single feather from my body and a simple ring."

"Oi!" He flinched as one of the guards shouted, but didn't move nor open his eyes, "Keep it down in there!"

Further ignoring, he continued, "Juez misericordioso de almas mortales...hear me now, I beg." His ears tuned into the soft sound of bones rattling distantly, and he knew he was being heard, "Forgive my soul for the things I have done, and know I've had nothing but good intentions my entire life. I only ask that El Eterno let me die quick and fast, and guide my soul to the underworld peacefully, where you and the King of the Underworld will decide my fate and afterwards where I hope to reunite with loved ones I've lost...Please..." He trailed off as he felt a breeze and a cold hand touched his cheek, the rattling of bones fearfully loud, *"So young, and yet so accepting of death..."* The voice was like the wind, a soft tisk reaching his ears, *"Such a mental state takes much loss and misery in such a short lifetime...my heart aches for you..."*

He didn't respond, feeling it cup his face, *"But...luckily for you, boy, it's not quite your time yet- however, many perils and trials await you going forward, and while I cannot tell you **when** you will stand before me for judgement, I assure you that you have much left to do before you can earn your spot in paradise."*

Before he could question what that meant, there was a breeze and another rattle of bones as the presence left. He opened his eyes to find the ring and feather gone, and his heart lifted- almost as if he truly felt there was going to be a change today. That this wasn't the end.

And perhaps it wasn't.

=x=

The young man paced back and forth, eyes screwed tight and holding his head as he tried to remember. It was like when you could think of the details of something, but you couldn't truly picture it in full clarity.

Crumpled up paper laid strewn about on his floor- failed attempts to re-create what he had seen. The current picture sat on his desk, nearly complete- except it didn't compare.

What he had drawn did not at all compare to the horror that was the beast- with its rough looking pitch black and marble white skin, it's piercing jagged teeth, the impossibly sharp claws, and those large, piercing green and red eyes. The boy had had nightmares before- he'd always had trouble with ghoulish beings infesting his sleep- but never in his life had he had it feel so real.

But, that led to the second subject of his quickly newfound obsession.

That. Boy.

No matter how many times he'd draw him, there was always *something* off about the image. He told himself he was mad- after all, how could he become so obsessed with someone who he'd not only just seen *once*, but also more than likely didn't *exist* .

Was he just lonely? He knew he should get out of the castle more- that he was probably just burying himself in his projects again. But this was something his mind was not letting him dismiss- like he *needed* to find out the truth of this person.

With a frustrated noise, he sat back down and plucked up the fountain pen once more, focusing on the drawing. Wide blue eyes that looked so older yet so young, pale blond hair that almost glowed, small and short frame, a young face...

A soft knock came to his door and he snapped out of it, looking over to see his mother standing there.

"Tarak? You haven't come down for dinner..."

"Dinner?"

His brow knitted together, confusion filling him, "But...it's not..." He looked to the balcony, eyes widening as he saw that it was indeed already night. What...what had happened? He could have sworn it was just past mid-day when he started.

Tarak was beyond confused, and slowly his mother made her way over. She picked up one of the papers, looking at it, "What is all this?" She raised a brow and he panicked a bit, "I-it's nothing-"

"Drawing a moon mark is nothing?!" She exclaimed as she examined the picture, looking at him sternly, "Tarak you should know better! Moon marks are not some silly, pretty design you can draw-"

"Mom-"

"For the love of the gods- have I taught you nothing?"

"Mother, please listen-"

"No, this is unacceptable- did you see this boy somewhere, or have you merely made him up?! What of this horrid monster?!"

"I- I'm not sure, he just appeared in my dreams last night!"

His mother stopped, freezing. Her eyes blew wide and she paled as if she'd seen a ghost, "No...no are you *sure* ?"

Tarak hesitantly nodded, and his mother looked like she was going to be truly sick. She pulled her red robe tighter around herself, shaking her head, "No...no that can't be..." Tarak cocked his head, reaching out and hugging her on instinct, "Mom...?"

"It can't be so soon...I can't lose you to it so soon..."

Shaking his head, the young prince was beyond confused, "Mother what are you talking about? Lose me to what?" His voice was gentle and laced with concern, his mind finally occupied from the boy and the monster. His mother looked scared and conflicted, before sighing and grabbing his hand gently, "Follow me. It's time you learned something I've kept for a long time."

=x=

Schlatt felt uncomfortable. The market was eerily quiet, as if most of the inhabitants had abruptly gotten up and left for some event. He had packed his bags full of supplies and Cap had already met up with the boys to bring them back to the wagon as night fell.

He had kept an eye out for "Big Q" all day, and found himself disappointed by the lack of the unusual noirette. Honestly, he didn't know why he was looking- he only met the guy once, and it was more likely that would be the last he saw of him ever again.

Schlatt jumped as he heard loud shouting and jeers, and he stopped. His curiosity peaked and something inside him drew him to follow the shouts.

There was a soft rattle of bones in the distance and he tensed, looking around. He frowned, rolling his eyes, "Gonna take a lot more than that if you wanna scare me off, Phil."

He got no reply and he headed to the voices, quickly navigating the streets and eventually reaching what looked to be the village courthouse. The place was filled with light and people were piling in, two armed guards standing by the door.

Schlatt hesitated, unsure of whether or not it was a good idea to enter. He knew he was to be expected back at the camp soon, but his curiosity was a dangerous part of his personality that he'd always bent to will of. If he didn't check it out, it would kill him not to know. Looking up, he saw the sun lower behind the horizon and took a breath. He had time to check it out and still be back before it got too late. Schlatt walked over and squeezed through the mob, eventually finding a seat and sitting down in silence.

The person on trial had their back to the mob as the judge spoke.

"Then, how do you explain this?"

The judge lifted a sack doll by one of its limbs, and even from where he sat Schlatt could see a bunch of pins stuck in the heart. Already Schlatt knew what this was about and it made him sick.

Schlatt knew the hatred towards witches was almost always unfounded and unjustified. He had a friend who was a witch, and while they joked about hating each other they were still close.

A small part of him ached suddenly; oh how he missed Minx's sharp tongue and how she always took his pride down a peg...

"Oh for the love of Xisuma- That isn't fucking mine! I told you already!"

The brunette paused, the gears in his head turning. Why did that person's voice sound so familiar?

"Watch your tongue you *creature* and answer me properly!!" The judge barked, "If it isn't yours, then whose is it and why was it found on your property?"

"I don't know, but I reckon it's because you assholes framed me!"

Schlatt gave a start at the sudden protest and outrage from the crowd, and the judge was red from anger, "Insolent little brat-!" In seconds, the man turned to look at the crowd in fright and Schlatt's eyes widened, recognizing him immediately.

That...that was Big Q.

He needed to do something and fast.

"You have nothing to prove your innocence, and have done nothing to sway my mind!" The judge snapped, "And as so, you will be burned at the stake this time to-"

Schlatt stood up quickly, "Your Honor?"

In two words, the entire room's eyes were on him. Q's eyes widened at the sight of him and Schlatt frowned with hard eyes, "May I speak?"

The main judge looked unsure, turning to the others in the court and conversing quietly before deciding, "Come up, state your full name and then speak- but do not waste our time."

Schlatt shuffled out of his seat and stood just behind the wall of the court floor, the room in agonizing silence save for his heavy steps.

"Jonathan Jebediah Schlatt."

There was a soft gasp that emitted from the people in the room, even the judge appearing to be taken aback. Schlatt suppressed a smirk- they knew of him, and that could work to his advantage, "By that reaction, I trust you all know who I am- so i'll cut to the chase." He gestured to Q, who shot him a peculiar look, "Anybody who knows about anything witches knows *that*, " He pointed an accusatory finger to the doll in the judges hand, "Isn't a voodoo doll. That's simply a sack doll with a bunch of pins stuck into it- nothing special binding or anything. Therefore that evidence is void. What other evidence is there?"

The judge frowned, "There are witnesses who have seen him turn into various animals such as black cats and crows."

Schlatt raised a brow and he crooked a finger to Q, the noirette hesitating before slowly approaching him with tied wrists, "Well let me see something."

He grabbed the smaller man by his jaw, turning his head and leaning in. He squinted, looking for specific markings or characteristics. He heard a snort and Q faked a grin as he whispered, "If you wanted a kiss before I died you could have just asked..."

"Shut up, I'm trying to save you." He huffed, moving Q's head to the side and pushing up his hat. He raised a brow as he saw the slightly pointed ears, and suddenly things started to click into place.

Schlatt grinned and let go, taking a step back, "Welp, I've figured out that out too." He looked to the judge, "What you have here is an avian shapeshifter- not a witch."

Q's eyes widened as he was taken aback. The room erupted in shouts and cries, yelling things about changelings and fae. The brunette grew annoyed as he exclaimed, "What the fuck is wrong with you people?!"

The mob grew silent again and Schlatt growled, "A Shapeshifter is not a Changeling and a Changeling is just a *type* of faerie! Changelings are wingless human look-alikes put in the place of a stolen child. Shapeshifters are people with the inhuman ability to turn into other animals, people, etcetera. An Avian shapeshifter is just a hybrid of an Avian and a shapeshifter."

The mob grew into whispers this time, and the judge seemed speechless. Schlatt hummed,

"Anything else?"

The judges looked between each other in a silent argument and both Schlatt and Q awaited the decision with bated breath. There was an irritated sigh and the main judge lifted the gavel, "As there is no more further evidence, this trial must be ended with only a single choice. The accused is freed from suspicion of witchcraft and free to go."

Q's eyes lit up and he looked to Schlatt in thanks as a guard untied his hands and escorted him out. Schlatt followed behind as the mob protested the verdict, and the moment he emerged from the building the wind was knocked out of him. He coughed, looking to see Q hugging him tightly, "Thank you- thank you so much-"

"It's no problem, really-" He squirmed, slightly uncomfortable in the hold. He wasn't really one to like others touching him- in fact, he much preferred to be the only to initiate any contact. Thankfully, he let go and stepped back, and Schlatt could see his cocky demeanor from before had disappeared, replaced with glassy eyes and a relieved posture, "I thought I was a goner..." His eyes widened a bit, as if realizing something before he spoke, "I...I owe you my life."

There's deafening silence between them as Schlatt processes the words and suddenly scoffs, shaking his head. He walked around Q, "Yea, sorry, no. You don't owe me shit, I was just doing the right thing."

"Schlatt-!" He scrambled to follow the taller man, "Please- I told you this yesterday, you did something for me, and now I owe you that equal favor." He struggled a bit to keep up as Schlatt suddenly grew annoyed, "Look, can't you just go how and that can be your favor to me? I'm leaving at sunrise tomorrow, so just be thankful and we can let bygones be bygones."

"Why can't I just come with you?"

Schlatt stumbled a bit, choking on his spit as he looked at the noirette, "What?! Are you crazy?! You'd leave whatever life you have here behind just because you owe me a debt for clearing your name? No. No fuckin' way-" he let out a sarcastic laugh as he began walking away, shaking his head as he left the shapeshifter standing there, "Sorry, but I already have to deal with two teenagers who are attached at the hip, this stupid magic compass they want to follow, and a death-prone immortal. Not happening, so just go home-"

"I don't *have* a life here." Q butted in, frowning deeply, "They burned my house down with everything of value in it. There isn't a single thing keeping me here nor a single coin to my name." He stated firmly, eyes boring into Schlatt's back, "So I'll ask again..."

Schlatt looked over his shoulder, crimson eyes narrowing on Q's form. The light of the courthouse behind him outlined his form while shadows covered his front, "You helped me, now I don't have

anywhere to go, and I owe you an equal debt. Let me come with you.”

Not a single word was said as the two men stared each other down, neither willing to back down in the stifling silence.

Eventually, Schlatt looked ahead, growling under his breath in irritation. If he knew this would happen, he likely would have left Q entirely. This was an entirely new issue and yet another mouth to feed on the road. He inhaled deeply before sighing, “I cannot fucking believe i’m doing this...Do you know how to use a sword? Or any type of weapon?”

“Yes?”

“Then here’s the conditions. You do as I say, you don’t touch my shit, and most importantly,” He spun around on his heel and grabbed Q by the front of his shirt as he hissed lowly, “If I find out you laid a single finger on either of my boys, you’ll be dead faster than you can say “oh fuck”, got it?”

The noirette had wide eye’s, surprised by the sudden hostility before laughing nervously and putting his hands up, “Got it. Promise.” Schlatt let go, letting him stumble back as he turned again, “C’mon.”

Q coughed, face slightly red as he contemplated what the hell just happened. He rubbed his neck, shakily grinning as he watched Schlatt walk ahead for a second, before finally jogging to catch up.

“Fuck that was hot.”

Schlatt nearly tripped at the remark, face reddening and groaning in annoyance as he grumbled, “What the fuck have I set upon myself...”

=x=

Slime stared into the fire, the golden blaze almost sending him back. He laid on his back on the ground, one hand tucked under his shirt and tracing the brand just on his opposite hip. His fingers traced the unbreaking loop of initials, heart slightly aching as every loop gave him a small surge of hope that quickly turned into heartbreak. Just like everyday of his life, he was putting himself through more pain- internally or externally- just to feel something other than cold and numb.

It used to be that he'd trace that loop and he'd be by his side within moments, sharing the peace he had and making him feel like he was alive again. That he was a human mortal once more, able to

live, eat, breath, and die without being forced to come to life again.

"You called?"

He shut his eyes, letting the memories play behind his eyes in the silence of the night.

"I missed you."

"Missed me, or missed my dick?"

He let out a surprised laugh before quickly muffling it with a hand over his mouth. Despite his bloody and gash covered arm, he gave the other man a punch to the shoulder. The taller only had a look of amusement, "You aren't denying, so I take it my dick is the answer."

He snorted and started snickering quietly- trying desperately not to laugh too loud. By this hour, the others were all fast asleep, leaving them two the only ones wide awake. It made sense though- the demon rarely ever slept and normally he had to force Slime into bed just to get him to rest. "Shut the fuck up," he laughed softly and breathlessly, "My arm is fucking mauled dumbass, I need your help." Although Slime couldn't feel the pain, he most definitely was still annoyed by the half-limp bloody appendage. He was damn lucky it was still intact and unbroken.

"You get your stupid ass nearly killed by a fucking sea dragon, and then this is what you want to make it up to me? By making me clean up your mangled arm?" He crossed his arms, one brow raised in slight annoyance. Slime gave a sheepish grin, "Pretty please, Teddy bear?"

Ted scoffed quietly- ignoring the way the nickname made his cheek flush just the tiniest bit- and walked in, pushing Slime to sit on the bed and grabbing a line of cotton from on the nightstand, "You are so lucky i'm used to your bullshit."

Slime gave a lopsided grin as the demon kneeled beside him, watching as he poured a cup of water over the wounds to clean them before plugging up the lacerations with clean cotton. There was a comfortable silence as he did so, Slime's gaze drifting between the wounds and the concentration on Ted's face. It felt oddly intimate- Ted wasn't one to pay much mind to injuries that weren't attached to himself or the people he cared for. He knew Slime couldn't feel pain, yet he was still so gentle- perhaps out of habit, honestly- but Slime liked to pretend it was some reason more.

Nobody knew of their closeness, and they preferred to keep it that way. It felt nice to have such a

secret little thing- to feel alive and loved. To have someone so intimately close and dear to his heart that he could give himself completely to.

Without a soul, he could never be judged, and thus he knew Phil would have the Undying one send him back time and time again no matter how he died. Same body, same mind, same everything- but without the warmth of living.

But, even if he couldn't die, it meant he could never leave the one person who understood his situation. A demon, of all people.

And by all the gods he loved him. Even without a soul, he could feel warmth bubble in his chest and his stomach fill with butterflies when with the taller man. Ted was his constant- he was there whenever he would die, he was there whenever he was alive, and he was an immortal just like Slime. The same tall, chaotic, intimidating man with dark brown almost black hair, dark eyes, stubble, broad shoulders, slightly lanky frame, and cheeky smile- with red horns and a whiplike tail and just...

Ted was his everything. People said demons weren't capable of love, but Ted proved it otherwise- because he knew Ted loved him too, just showed it in his own way. The subtle worry, the fact that he sought to protect him during fights despite knowing Slime would be fine even if he died, the gentle, passionate kisses, the gentle way he held his hand, the lingering touch when dressing his wounds that was just a smidge too long to...

There was nothing else that could fill the void in him. He adored the others, sure- Traves, Cooper, Schlatt, Noah, Connor...but Ted was different. Ted made him feel human again, made his heart do flips and feel like an utter fool.

And now Ted was gone. Either dead or somewhere in the world far beyond his reach- hell, maybe even back in the underworld. There was a sense of severe loss that plagued his heart at the thought of never seeing and feeling the demon again. Maybe this was his further punishment; maybe Helios was punishing him from beyond the grave, dooming him to an unending loveless life. It would only be fair.

If only he had tears left to shed. If only he hadn't cried so much in his life that not much made him cry anymore.

=x=

On a mountain far across the world, a demon woke with a start. There was a faint tug at his thumping heart that drew him from his bed and to the mouth of the cave he lived in, eyes wide as he looked into the endless expanse of night sky.

“No...it can't be...”

He whispered into the empty air, breath leaving in short pants, “He's not...no...” Shaking his head, he took a few steps back and sighed, “No i'm just...just imagining things. Fuckin'hell...” Shaking his head, he crawled back in bed with a sigh, forcing himself to shut his eyes as he repeatedly reminded himself that whoever was calling to him was long gone and dead.

But if that was true...

Why did that tugging never cease?

Chapter End Notes

Some things to set straight:

No. Phil is NOT a god in the story. Phil is the judge of souls, but he is not a god. Still a powerful entity, but not a god.

The difference between Changelings and Shapeshifters is going to be very important.

No, Tarak is NOT an OC. He is in fact an MCYT, one that is very well beloved, but I'm not using real names :)

Dill, Lavender, Lemonbalm, Gardenia, & Begonia

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

I finally have gotten around to getting used to instagram, so any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on there now! The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, and my @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

With a rumbling sigh, Wilbur shut his eyes, reaching deep again. He took slow, steady breaths, searching deeply to fall back into his subconscious. He had felt something worrying the other night; something that could mess with everything he worked hard for.

He felt static crawl on his skin as he tried to pull energy from the walls around him, absorbing all he could for this. He growled lowly, shaking as he struggled, until finally he saw a flicker. Realizing it was working, he kept at it until the world around him shifted and steadied, turning into the dark void that stretched endlessly. He looked around until he saw three pillars, frowning, "Now, I know that's not all you have to show me..."

Taking a deep breath, he continued to pull from the ground, his body feeling as if he was burning up as sweat cascaded down his brow.

Slowly, more shifted in the void, the pillars shaking as something sprouted from the ground. He gave a tired smirk and slowly stood, the shackles around his wrists and ankles gone.

Wilbur made his way to the new structure, the large wall of crystal towering over menacingly. He laid one hand on the smooth surface, gazing at his reflection with disdain.

Gods, how horrid he looked.

Brushing it from his mind, he searched along the wall until he found it, frowning.

It was gone.

He growled in frustration as he gazed at the large crack in the crystal. Just as he suspected, the

damn beast was awake and more than likely already had taken its host- the question was, how long would it be before it's host found Koray; and when that happened, what would it do?

"Show me the fate of Koray, Helios, and Eclipse." He demanded. The crystals shuddered and began to glow, images swirling as he backed away.

The crystal wall showed a tall boy with black and white hair, pale skin, and red and green eyes- this, Wilbur guessed, was Eclipse. Beat up and dirty looking, he meets Koray's eyes and gets on one knee, surprising the moon incarnate as he kisses his hand and says something with a gentle smile.

The image then goes to Helios, watching this exchange with a deep frown.

Suddenly, there's a noise like a whip snapping and the images are split down the middle by the crack, two different scenarios dancing on each side. To his left, it showed Koray and Eclipse becoming closer through kindness while Helios put his focus on himself. It showed Koray and Helios fighting, before showing Koray running away with Eclipse only to be followed by a regretful Helios. Upon confrontation, Koray collapses and something triggers Eclipse into becoming the beast, curling around Koray and preventing Helios from getting to him.

Knowing it was to end in Koray's death, Wilbur turned to the second image with disinterest. He wanted to figure out how to get rid of Eclipse before he could lock onto and interfere with Koray.

To his right, it showed Koray and Helios drifting apart while Eclipse tried to comfort Koray. The process repeats- the fight, Eclipse and Koray run away but are followed by an- instead of regretful- angry Helios, and there's a confrontation. Only this time, rather than collapsing, Helios lunges for Koray and Eclipse turns within moments. The beast tries to maul at Helios, but Koray- in panic- somehow holds back the beast from slaughtering Helios. It's not enough though, and without a second thought the beast turns on Koray and mauls the moon incarnate instead.

Wilbur waited for a third fate- but that's all there seemed to be. In the end, their fates were to die.

"No..." Wilbur whispered, "No this...this isn't it. That cannot be the result of everything i've worked for!!" Storming forwards, he hit the crystal, enraged by what he was shown, "No! Show me something different! Show me!!"

There was a low rumbling and loud clicking as the wall vibrated from his strikes, and in second the facade was broken and Wilbur was pulled back onto his knees. The chains weighed him down once more and cold pricked at his skin, eyes wide as he realized what had happened.

It kicked him out.

Wilbur let out a loud roar of anger, what he'd just seen plaguing his mind with grief. All his work only to receive zero result- no that couldn't be it that couldn't happen.

He wouldn't *let* it happen.

=x=

The next morning, Techno had woken Bad bright and early, whispering about practice and the two quickly heading off. As they slipped through the mostly empty streets, Bad felt unease creeping up his spine, keeping a close eye on his surroundings until they finally reached the cover of the forest. Techno was quick to locate another good, hidden spot; setting down the things he brought and speaking up, "Last time, we went over a dagger and crossbow. This time however..." He dug around in his bags and withdrew a long wooden sword. It wasn't the type you'd give to a child, but rather one that you'd give to a soldier in training. He held it out and Bad took it, surprised at how heavy it was in his hand as Techno continued while taking out an identical sword, "This time, we're gonna use a more common weapon. Swords." Techno looked over to him and raised a brow as he gestured up, "Your hair."

Bad gave a look of surprise before realizing, setting down the practice sword and unraveling the white ribbon from his wrist and using it to tie back his hair. Once finished, he picked up the sword and Techno hummed, "Just like last time, we'll start with a basic lesson, then your stance."

He twirling the wooden sword in his hand as he spoke, "There are eight angles of attack with a sword when cutting- straight down, straight up, diagonally down to the right, diagonally down to the left, diagonally up to the right, diagonally up to the left and finally, left and right strikes horizontally-" As he spoke, he demonstrated, the sound of the wooden sword cutting through the air a menacing one, "Of course, while other angles are theoretically possible, they are all pretty much variations of those eight main attack angles. Same thing with thrusts."

Techno gestured for Bad to stand as he was before asking for him to still. He walked over and tisked, "Not quite the exact stance, but you're close."

He squatted down, tapping Bad's back foot to make him adjust a bit, "Move this back a bit more- your feet need to be at least shoulders width apart- and turn your foot to either a forty five, or a ninety degree angle." He stood up as the siren adjusted, moving on to the back, "This is the most wrong." Techno tossed the sword aside and moved forward, reaching around with one hand. He pressed the flat of his left palm to Bad's stomach and put his other hand to the center of Bad's back. Bad followed the movement as Techno spoke, "You're leaning forward when your back needs to be relatively straight. You also need to keep your upper body centered above your hips."

Stepping back, Techno picked up the sword again and stood in front of Bad, positioning himself, “Your knees are bent, so you got that right, but remember you need to be on the balls of your feet.”

Putting the swords together, Bad took a few breaths to calm himself as Techno kept going, “Something you want to remember when fighting is that you always want to keep your weapon between you and the center of your opponent. Secondly, if you move your weapon, make sure it's your *weapon that moves* first, not your body.” Bad gave a confused look that pulled a humorous smile from Techno, “What I mean, is that the weapon almost always moves in before the motion of the feet, Bad. If you cannot hit the opponent with the combination of foot and hand movement and retreat in a safe distance afterwards, the weapon must arrive in front of you and stop your opponent. It must be your shield when you do not have a proper one. Understood?”

Bad nodded and Techno moved, “Lets try some basics now. Starting with attacks.”

=x=

“Seriously Dream, you should’ve seen it- He just has this air about him, and his laugh, oh dear Xisuma his *laugh* !” Dream had an amused smile as Sapnap went on and on about his date, the incubus clearly being on cloud nine. There was a spring in his step, seeming light on his feet as he described everything word for word. Dream’s hands worked through sorting the materials, his own mind drifting as he was brought back to when he first met George.

“I can help you, you know.”

*Dream looked up from where he sat begrudgingly, eyes narrowing on the hooded figure behind the bars, “Oh **really** now?” He drawled, voice laced with slight venom as he slowly stood. Walking to the bars, he could see now that the other was a teenage boy- seemingly seventeen or eighteen- with brown hair and blue eyes. He smelled of expensive perfume and the dark blue cloak he wore was clearly made of a rich material. Looking into his eyes, there was a defiance and curiosity swirling in them, like this boy knew damn well he was doing something he wasn’t supposed to.*

“You’re Captain Dream right?”

For a second, Dream paused, thinking about going for the classic ‘depends on who’s asking’, before deciding against it, “Yea, mind telling me who you are?” The brunette raised his chin a bit, his chest puffing in pride as he spoke, “Crown prince George Non Inventi of Donadim.”

While it looked slightly ridiculous, there was also an aura of regality and importance in the way he held himself. Dream raised a brow in amusement, "Prince, huh? And what exactly do you want from me?"

*"Simple. You're bound for death row." George lifted his hand, showing off the cell key with a smirk, "I can free you, as long as you help me." Dream stood, slightly stunned as he stared at the key. A lazy smirk played across his lips, eyes turning back to the prince as his interest was finally captured, "Uhuh...and what exactly does the **Your Highness** need help with?"*

"Escape."

George's voice was firm, the single word leaving his mouth without hesitation. It startled the blonde into being speechless, blinking a few times as he let out an unsteady laugh, "Ah...pardon?"

"I need your help to escape the castle for the day. Go undetected, but while still having protection by my side."

*"You want me...to act as your **bodyguard** ?" Dream asked in suspending disbelief, nearly laughing at the ridiculousness of the request. The prince's nose scrunched up and his face reddened a bit, looking annoyed, "Yes, what about it?!"*

*"Don't you have actual guards for that? Why in the world would you want to hire a rogue, foreign pirate captain as your **bodyguard** ?"*

*"Simple," George took a deep breath, calming down, "The guards work for my parents. They'll tell my parents everywhere I go, and everything I say and do. They will dictate my every movement and make sure I can't go to the places in town I want to explore. **You** won't." There was a squeeze in Dream's chest, sympathy bubbling in him. There was this sad, yearning look in George's eyes that was so familiar to him. The want to know. To explore and learn.*

"You feel trapped." George looked surprised, but soon a small smile pulled at his lips, "Yes..."

*Dream looked down, leaning against the bars as he thought. It was only one day, so what could the harm be? He swallowed dryly, sighing, "Fine. I'll be your bodyguard for **one** . Day."*

The brunette's eyes lit up, smile widening, "Really?"

"Really."

Hastily, the young prince slid the key in the lock and opened the cell door as quietly as possible, prompting a curious look from the captain. George cleared his throat, "I uh...kinda borrowed the keys. So we have to sneak."

Dream wheezed softly, snickering, "You mean you stole them."

"No, borrowed! There's a difference!"

"Sure there is."

"Shut up!"

The two bickered quietly as they snuck through the halls, and for the first time in so long, Dream felt a familiar fluttering in his stomach.

"Dream?"

The Captain snapped out of it, looking at Sapnap to see the other man looking at him strangely. He cleared his throat, "Sorry just- just-" His throat squeezed to prevent the excuse, and he reluctantly told the truth, "Just...thinking about how me and George met. You reminded me of it."

The incubus made a quiet "oohhh" and nodded in understanding as Dream continued, "And *speaking* of such, I should probably go make sure he's doing alright." Sapnap grinned brightly, "That mean I can go see Karl?"

Rolling his eyes, the faerie nodded and Sapnap yet out a loud cheer, practically booking it as Dream walked to the pirate chambers. He gently rapt his knuckles against the door and heard a soft noise, his heart squeezing a bit. He opened the door and slipped into the slightly darkened room, "It's just me..."

George looked up at him from the desk where he was busying himself with work. Dream walked

over, concerned, "You doing alright?"

"I'm just fine, why do you ask?" The brunette chirped, putting the feather pen back in its inkwell. He smiled, but Dream could see right through it- that little bit of strain in the grin and pain in his eyes. His tone took a softer turn, resting his hand over Georges as he spoke, "Starfish, you know why..."

George fidgeted uncomfortably, turning his eyes away and not responding. Letting out a deep sigh, Dream reached forward and took the brunette's chin, gently directing him to look at him, "George, *talk to me* ...you don't have to act like nothing's wrong. Whether you loved them or not, no matter how you felt before, nothing was gonna stop you from feeling sad that their gone-

George sat up abruptly and pulled away as he shouted "Stop! Stop saying that, they aren't dead!" His voice cracked as he spoke, "It isn't true and whoever told you that was probably *paid* to tell you that!" Dream watched sadly as he ranted and raved angrily, "They aren't dead, they just want to guilt trip me into coming home! That's all they have *ever* done!!"

"George..."

"No!!" He snapped, whipping around to look at Dream. He was red-faced and watery eye'd, seeming to be holding in tears as he yelled, "I don't want to talk about this, okay?! You aren't gonna convince me they're dead, so just- just stop bringing it up!" He slammed his hands down on the desk hard enough to make the small items on top of it rattle and Dream flinched.

George breathed heavily, head down as he seemed to be trembling a bit. After a few heartbeats, Dream circled around the desk slowly and cautiously. He reached out, resting a hand on George's arm, and he swore he could feel the brunette's racing heartbeat under the thin piece of cloth separating them. He slid it to his back, subtly pushing him into his arms.

There was a whimper and George turned into the older males hold hesitantly, Dream wrapping his arms around him as he buried his face into the crook of his neck. The trembling got worse and eventually the faerie heard George let out soft, short sobs, shoulders bouncing as he took hiccuping breaths. Dream rubbed his back, resting his head on his chin and cooing softly that it was alright. George gave continued protests insisting the same things he had before, and this time Dream gave varied neutral affirmations of "alright", "okay", and "if you think so".

After things began to quiet between them, Dream leaned back and down a bit, pressing a kiss to George's forehead as he whispered, "You know I love you, right?"

George gave a weak, strained smile as he whispered back hoarsely, "Yes, but please don't make me say it back..."

Dream chuckled quietly, "Fine, not right now...do you want to lay down? Are you hungry or thirsty?" He knew it was the middle of the day, but he couldn't imagine making George do anything when it was apparent he wasn't mentally stable.

"Laying down sounds nice right now...water too..."

"I'll get you some." He reluctantly pulled away and George whined softly at the loss before stumbling over to the bed and flopping down on it. Dream snorted before turning to leave. He knew what George was going through- grief wasn't an easy thing. The only difference was, where there was nobody there for him, he knew he would be there for George.

He'd make sure of it.

=x=

After separating from Dream, Sapnap had run off and spent the rest of his day by Karls' side while he worked, the two of them chatting. Like this, Sapnap got to see a variety of people from all walks of life passing by with wonder. A lot of werecats and werewolves, a few mermaids in human form, elves, demons- it was a long list that Sapnap barely felt like he couldn't even begin to start listing. He sighed happily, "This really just seems like such a magical place to live."

"It is!" Karl chirped, before suddenly he hesitated, "Well, it's paradise *usually*, but uh..." Sapnap looked at him, tilting his head a bit in confusion as the clockmaker milled over his words, "There's been some recent troubles that our Queen has been facing. Bombardment from another kingdom who doesn't really agree with our beliefs..." He swallowed thickly, "Most of us have been trying not to show it, but we're all real worried. The festival has really just been our escape from the thought that uh...that they've..." He trailed off, biting his lip nervously and furrowing his brow. Sapnap put a hand on his shoulder, "Karl...?"

The brunette sighed, shaking his head, "A few weeks back, they threatened war if we didn't change our ways. Of course, we didn't, but...well it's been a constant anxiety that they might just spring the attack at any moment..."

Sapnap paled a bit, the thought of such a wonderful place being waged war on just because of its beliefs making him sick, and the thought of *Karl* being caught in the middle of it making him feel

even worse. His mouth worked faster than his mind, and before he could stop himself he blurted out, "You know you can always come with us if you'd like."

Karl froze, looking at him in surprise before a smile slowly stretched across his face, "Really? You'd let me tag along?"

"I don't see why not- I'm sure Dream won't mind if I just ask him!"

Karl was beaming, eyes lit up as he practically jumped and hugged Sapnap. The incubus laughed and hugged back as Karl excitedly chanted about him being the best, but deep down his heart sunk.

Amusix, what had he just promised?

=x=

"Excuse me!!"

Sam stopped as a muffled voice called out to him, looking to see a man in odd attire followed by a young lady rushing towards him. He was thin, but not weak or frail looking. He wore a slightly darkish pink cloak with the inside being deep black, as well as a loose black shirt with matching black pants, a darkened orange sash around his waist and his nose down was covered by a faded orange bandanna. From what Sam could see, he had tan skin, his hands were wrapped in bandages, and he looked like he'd just been in a scuffle. The woman with him, however, looked clean. She wore an identical cloak to the man and wore a loose dress decorated with soft and dark pinks, and a deep black corset. There was an aura of grace around her, but he was unable to get a clear look at her face due to her pulling her hood down to hide herself.

As they reached him, the man stopped and was panting as he spoke hastily, "I he...heard from some other s-sailors that you were on a route where you would be going to Darinsyth- is this true?"

Sam hesitated, "Well... yes ...but-"

"Thank Xisuma- you are the Captain, yes? Please- could we tag along?"

"Well-"

"I could pay you too- Its urgent, and you're the only ship I've found heading that way-"

"I-i suppose so- but-"

"Fantastic! Thank you sir you're a blessing-!"

Before Sam could get another word in, the man rushed past him with the woman in tow, the sudden, abrupt nature of the conversation practically making him feel dizzy. He looked lost as Ant approached him with a curious look, "You alright?"

"I...have no idea what just happened."

Ant snorted, "I can tell..."

"Where...is Dream? We...we might have a problem now."

"I think he's taking care of George. Might be stuck like that till nightfall."

Sam winced, looking back at where the two people were and sighing, "I'm gonna have a lot of explaining to do when he wakes up..."

=x=

Techno was weak.

He was really, really weak.

Because *somehow* , through some type of magic, Bad had convinced him to sit down for just five minutes during their brief break, and he'd fallen asleep while the crafty little siren *cuddled* against him.

When he woke up, the moon was up, Bad was curled into his side, and there was a heavy feeling in his chest that was terribly familiar. There was a creeping, eerie feeling crawling up his spine and making everything inside him tense. He gently shook Bad awake and the siren sat up tiredly with a yawn. Without a second to spare, he stood up and grabbed their things, packing up wordlessly.

"Techno?" Bad asked, confused at the man's demeanor, "What's going on...?"

"Something bad is going to happen. I can feel it." He left out exactly what "something" was, but Bad got the message well enough and slowly stood. Techno waved him to for him to follow and the two made their ways out of the forest, running along one of the front walls of the small castle. Overlooking the city. As they reached the front street that led right from the castle gate into the town, Techno froze and held an arm out to stop Bad. Bad gave him a look, and without explanation Techno began to back up, eyes narrowed at the gate.

"Techno?"

His voice was barely above a whisper, and Techno just seemed to ignore him. The siren heard him counting softly under his breath, and just as he was about to try getting his attention again he saw a barrel roll up to the gate. Techno reacted immediately, grabbing him and pulling him close as possible and dropping to the ground. With Techno's back to the gate, Bad was barely able to process anything as Techno covered his ears and there was suddenly a loud, muffled blast and yells.

His eyes widened as fire rose behind the older man, and without looking back Techno stood, grabbing Bad's hand and pulling him up as he spoke urgently, "We need to get back to the ship and go. Now."

=x=

Tarak eyed the book in his lap, the sleek cover woven in symbols long forgotten. His mother had given it to him last night, claiming it to have answers in regards to his fate, but so far it had brought nothing to him but more questions.

Sighing, he opened it again to a random page, eyes locked on the Gaelic letters as he read it outloud to himself, "As the Goddess Luna overtook her beloved brother, an event like none other

fell upon all of existence. The first ever eclipse. With his death, she took over his borne duty of raising the sun, and darkness never before seen washed over existence.” Tarak flipped several pages ahead, something pulling at his heart.

“Grief followed as the Goddess began to weep, as with her brother's death, she felt loneliness like none other. However, her pure, sorrowful tears mixed with Helios’ rage and vengeance tainted blood as the glowing liquids fell to the darkened earth, and from the soil sprung a horror unlike any the world had seen. Born from the mournful tears of the moon and the rage-filled blood of the sun seeping into the shadows of the eclipse, was a creature not quite god-like, but far from human.

Though decrepit, the creature held only adoration for the moon goddess, but held vile hatred towards the sun. It tried to join the human kind, but it quickly learned of humanity’s cruelty and buried itself away into the deepest depths of the underworld. Upon the creature’s slumber, it chose a single mortal soul to act as its vessel, declaring that one day it would awaken in human form with the hopes to find the child of the moon, longing to feel whole once more.”

Tarak traced his fingers over the drawings, seeing the moon holding its arms out to the monster almost as if welcoming it. He looked towards his own drawings on the wall, frowning. In the story, it didn’t paint the monster as...well, a monster. It painted the monster as the unwilling byproduct of a tragedy- maybe even a metaphor.

Shaking his head, he flipped through the book some more. He flipped past other legends- such as how the Judge of souls *became* the Judge of souls- and prophecies- such as the Gorgon and the Fox. He stopped on a page titled, ‘The prophecy of New Beginnings.’ and tilted his head curiously.

He read off it, murmuring to himself softly, “New beginnings start with a mortal isolated from those around him, with hair of snow and eyes pale blue. Fueled by a yearning of acceptance, he will strike a deal with the Devilish King himself and shed the blood of many innocent with two others by his side, before having to slay his closest companions. The deal complete, he will discover why one never trusts the tricky god of the underworld, his hair of snow and eyes pale blue becoming stained with the blood he’d shed- a reminder forever of his actions.

Then will follow the exile of a faerie prince, with wings of emerald and hair of gold that will be cut from him as punishment for his curiosity and strong-will. Many years later, follows the births of Sun, Moon, and Eclipse. After, the child of two warring sea species would rescue the child whose birth brought together two warring land clans from near-death, and together they’d grow from tragedy- blossoming love only to part with broken hearts...” He trailing off, listing the rest in his mind.

An immortal cursed by Helios himself will be tempted into taking a bite of a golden apple from the underworld.

A half-breed raised by the undead judge of the underworld will be sealed away by the judge and

the god of war.

The children of sun and moon will leave the place they call home with a man who has long learned his lesson.

The immortal will be revived and will find the sun and moon.

The vessel of eclipse will meet the moon in a dream, becoming unable to resist the moon's call and finally leaving all they've known to find them.

The man who had long learned his lesson will be met with a man who follows his debts.

The half-breed will be released by the sun, and the man with debts will save the man who long learned his lessons.

The moon will awaken eclipse fully, and soon the two will meet in an in separate entwining of fate.

When all the stars align, only then will the prophecy be fulfilled, and the fate of life as we know it will be only in the hands of the moon, sun, and eclipse themselves.

Tarak shut the book, tossing it to the side and burying his face in his hands. What did it all mean? Was he really supposed to believe all this nonsense about sun and moon and eclipse? About a monster being in love with the moon? Was it all some metaphor, or was it all more literal than he could see?

It all seemed too absurd to him. Was he supposed to find whatever boy he was drawing and find him because he was...what? 'Inseparably intertwined' to him? It was purely ridiculous to think- sure, he believed in soulmates, but this was far more than that.

There was a small tug deep within him, images dancing behind his eyes.

"Hel...lo?" He spoke, as he slowly stood up straight. He felt put on the spot, in awe at the being standing in the fog in front of him. They practically glowed, striking ice blue eyes and pale- almost white- blonde hair. They barely stood at his midsection, looking just as lost as he was.

A depiction of something otherworldly that he restrained himself from reaching out and touching with a faint wonder of it being real or an illusion.

"I...hi?"

The being responded, voice slightly higher and airy, and Tarak's heart stilled for only a moment-out of shock, he told himself, obviously- quickly shaking himself out of it.

"Who are you?"

Tarak's eyes snapped open again as he tuned into the sound of heavy armor clattering down the hall. A loud boom made him jump, and look towards his glass doors. His stomach dropped as his hair stood on end, a lump forming in his throat as he dropped the book to the ground and ran to the balcony. He shoved it open and ran out, looking down to see the gate had been blown down and there were armored soldiers storming through. Tarak backed up, heart pounding in his chest as his mind raced. Turning, he ran back in and pushed the doors shut behind him. He raced around his room, grabbing things as he continued hearing the chaos beginning to stir outside. He looked to the balcony again as a sudden dread filled him, and just as he did he was met with the sight of a cannonball heading straight for him. His mind shut down, frozen in place as it flew at him at high speed. It blew open the balcony doors with a loud clatter, glass and splintered wood flying towards him.

He yelped as there was a blind flash of light and the cannonball stopped mid-air, abruptly dropping down onto the wood floor. Tarak watched in astonishment as it began to melt and spread on the floor, until it had created a crescent moon.

The doors behind him burst open and he looked to see the captain of his mothers fleet standing there, the woman's blade covered in crimson as she ran to him and threw him a deep black cloak, "Tarak, your mother asked me to get you- you need to come with me."

"Puffy what is going on?"

"I'll tell you later, I *promise* , but we need to go!"

With one last look at his room, Tarak followed after Puffy hastily and slipped on the cloak, the only thing in his hands being the book.

And, in the end, it would be all he would need.

=x=

As Tommy looked at Tubbo, he noticed a tired, uncomfortable look on his face, "Big man? You okay?"

The pale blonde nodded, before taking a breath and shivering, "Yea I just- feel drained all of a sudden. My entire body fuckin' hurts too...Like I got absolutely pummeled by something heavy."

"That's strange..."

Was all Tommy said, and just like that the conversation was over. Because it really *was* just strange...

Especially considering he had suddenly felt drained too, and they'd both *just* slept.

Iris, Tansy, & Black-eye'd Susan.

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

Any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on tumblr, Instagram, or on discord! For insta:

The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, but I'm seriously new to Instagram and don't know much about it so bear with me. My @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As they're running through the streets, it's easy for Bad to tell that Techno is in his element. His eyes sharp and focused, there's not a single stumble in his step, and the way he's pulling Bad along is almost careless. His grip is tight, but Bad doesn't once complain- he's quickly learned that Techno's instincts don't lie, and he knows he wouldn't keep up if Techno wasn't gripping him like a shackle.

There are others in the street, people in sailor uniforms with shields and swords. There's loud bangs of gunshots all-too-familiar ringing, and Bad jolts as somebody running past him is shot and collapses. He *wants* to stop and help- he attempts it- but that train of thought is quickly cut off by Techno hissing at him that there's nothing he can do. The air smells of gunpowder and ash and he can see buildings burning, flames rising high in the sky.

Burning flesh, skin melting off bones, a woman just like him screaming in agony-

Techno stops abruptly as a burning building collapses in the road in front of them, stopping them in his tracks and crushing a few people under it, "Fuck-!" He curses loudly, quickly looking around. His eyes flash red as he gets angrier, seeing dead lying in the street.

Techno is struggling. There's bloodshed and rage surrounding and filling his every sense, making his own blood boil hot like lava as it runs through his veins. His own control is slipping from his hands, and he has no way to stop it other than wanting to stir the fighting more.

His own anger climbs as well. Anger at the disgrace that was Xisuma's creations- anger at their inability to tolerate what they didn't understand and their ongoing paths of destruction. The need to destroy what was beautiful and cause chaos within peace.

"The potatoes grow from these spuds." He spoke softly as he dug the small hole with his bare hands. There was mud and soil under his nails and staining his clothes- but he didn't mind. He was used to it, "You put them in the ground," He picked up a spud and showed it to the little girl beside him, who watched with wide eyes and an intrigued smile, "And then you take care of them, watering them every now and then, until they grow."

"Like flowers?" She chirped, and he gave a soft laugh, "Yea, I guess you could say that. Like mom's tulip bulbs."

She bounced excitedly at that, about to say something before gasping and pointing, "Bunny in the veggie patch!"

***Devlin** stood up quickly, looking to see what his sister was pointing at. Just as she said, there was a briar rabbit digging at their vegetables, and Devlin sighed in annoyance, "Give me a second Del..." He began walking only to stop as his little sister cried after him and grabbed his arm, "Don't hurt it!"*

Looking down at his little sister, it was hard to get mad at the large puppy dog eyes she was giving him as a fond smile crossed his face. He pulled his hand away gently, "I won't, I promise. Just stay put, okat?"

She smiled back, her sky blue eyes sparkling with innocence as she nodded and stood there. He hopped over the fence and the rabbit jumped in alarm. He chased it in circles before he finally was able to catch it, holding it gently but firmly.

Holding it close, he could feel it trembling as its heart was pounding in its chest. Devlin felt a twinge of guilt, looking down at its big beady black eyes- it was terrified of him, rightfully so, he was much larger than it. Its soft brown pelt glistened in the sunlight, the body warm and delicate.

He carefully climbed back out of the patch and Delilah ran over to him, cheering, "You got the bunny!" He hummed, "That I did." He held it out, "Wanna give it a pet? Be gentle though- it's scared of us."

She reached out and stroked it gently before furrowing her brow and tilting her head, "Why is it scared of us?"

Gods, what he would give to be as innocent and naive as her again...

"We're human. We are big, and scary, like the things that eat rabbits. The world's mean, as much as we don't want it to be, and rabbits are pretty low on the food chain..."

"But...that's not fair...Bunnies are so pretty and cute- why would anybody wanna eat a bunny?"

He looked from her to the rabbit, heart twisting a bit as his throat squeezed. He stood and gestured for her to follow as she continued, "But...but those doggy people at Mason's farm are pretty and kind too an' Mason's daddy isn't very nice to them either. He's mean..." His eyes widened as he registered what she was talking about, her eyes looking up to him, "And it's like how those boys at the schoolhouse pull your hair and make fun of your appearance...even though I think you're really pretty."

They stopped at the treeline of the forest and he felt his eyes water, heart aching, "I..." Devlin blinked tears away, laughing shakily as an ear-splitting grin spread across his face, "Y...yea..." He crouched down, slowly lowering the rabbit to the ground and letting it run off before he turned to her. His own icy blue eyes overflowed with tears that spilled down his face. His sister reached out and took his much larger hands in her own, her own peach skin like a splatter of paint against his sickly pale skin. Without much prompting, she jumped in his arms, hugging him tightly as she buried her face in his snow-white hair.

He let out a soft sob as he hugged her back tightly. This kid was going to be the death of him.

"Stop-" The man barely got a word in before Techno sliced his sword through him with ease, "Techno all the ways to the docks are blocked off!" Bad shouted over the commotion. Techno took deep breaths, pushing the memory aside as he grounded himself again and looked to his left, "There! Side alley!" He ran for it and the two hopped a few crates.

=x=

Dream stabbed his sword through another sailor's torso before kicking him overboard, looking to make sure George, Ant, and one of the mystery strangers were lifting the sails. Sapnap was bouncing on his heels anxiously, looking to the burning town with desperation in his eyes. The captain looked around before growling, "Dammit, where are Bad and that bastard?!"

"Dream, I need to get Karl!" Sarnap blurted out and Dream looked at him in shock, "What?! Sarnap you can't be serious!"

"Please!" He begged, and Dream felt his heart twist as he looked between Sarnap and the town. He let out a frustrated growl and met Sarnaps eyes, "Be as fast as possible and don't you dare get yourself killed!"

Without hesitation, Sarnap jumped over the side of the boat and made a mad dash for the town, pulling out his sword as he fought through sailors.

His heart raced as he ran through the streets, the heat becoming sweltering as the fires burned brighter the closer he came to the center of town. He skidded to a stop as he found the clockmakers shop, blood running cold to find it set ablaze.

"Karl!!"

He screamed at the top of his lungs, listening closely as he heard a muffled call for help back. Backing up, he took a running start before slamming his shoulder into the door, the burning wood easily collapsing under his weight. Karl looked at him from the back room, a bunch of the clocks knocked over and set alight on the floor separating them. There was a relieved, shocked smile on his face as tears fell, saying something that Sarnap couldn't hear above the crackling fire. Frantic, Sarnap called over, "I need you to jump over to me!"

Karl's eyes widened and he shook his head, seeming panicked now, "I can't!! I-it's too big of a jump-"

"I'll grab you before you land, I promise!" He looked to the ceiling, blood rushing in his ears as he could tell it was moments from collapsing in on them, "I need you to trust me!"

A fearful, unsure look crossed his face before he took a deep breath and nodded, "O-okay!"

"Count to three, then jump!"

Karl nodded, backing up and taking deep breaths before running and jumping. Sarnap moved forward, sticking his arms out just enough to grab him- quickly pulling him so he wouldn't land in the fire. Without stopping, he ran out while dragging Karl behind him, blood rushing in his ears as the roof collapsed behind them.

=x=

"Duck!" The stranger followed Sam's instruction, the arrow whizzing overhead and striking a sailor about to stab him. The man looked at him with what looked like a smile under his mask, "Good eye!"

"Thanks-"

"Nine o' clock!"

Sam spun around and slashed his sword across another sailor's chest, backing up until his back was to the strangers and they circled each other, "I'm Sam by the way- I don't think we've introduced ourselves- Seven!" He jabbed and turned to the man, who spoke up, "Ponk! The lady I'm with is Hannah Rose!"

"Nice to meet you, Ponk!"

"Nice to meet you to- behind!" Ponk lunged forward and jabbed his sword just under Sam's arm, making the taller flinch as the sailor behind him was stabbed. Sam laughed nervously, meeting Ponk's eyes as they were pressed together, "This is a really bad time for introductions now that I think about it."

Ponk laughed, loud and clear, "What are you talking about? This is the perfect time!"

They twisted around each other and slashed at two sailors in perfect sync before turning back to each other as Ponk continued with a playful twinkle in his eyes, "In fact, I'd say this is bringing us closer already~"

Sam snorted, chuckling. Despite the rocky start, he was beginning to like this man already, "I'm glad you think so..."

=x=

"Puffy, where are we going?"

Tarak tried calling after the older woman frantically as he was dragged along, shaking in fear as explosions and screams were heard. Puffy sighed in frustration, "I'm trying to get you to safety!"

Guards rushed past as they made their way through the winding halls, out the servants passage and into the cold night. The full moon was high in the sky, lighting their way through the dark garden as the noises were even louder. There was no stopping as they approached a pair of horses waiting for them outside the garden gate, both black as midnight wearing saddlebags filled with something, and Puffy gestured for Tarak to get on the horse.

She grabbed a lantern from the stone wall of the garden and handed it to him as soon as he was on the horse, opening one of the saddle bags and quickly slipping the book in. Suddenly the horses began whinny and rear up, front legs kicking in the air as there was a loud crash. Tarak and Puffy looked on in horror to see one of the towers crumbling down, the prince's heart aching as adrenaline pumped through him. He looked to Puffy, a sudden thought occurred to him as he realized she was still looking to the castle, "Puffy- my mother- you- w-why are there only two horses and why aren't you getting on?!"

Puffy looked at him with sad eyes, and it was clear what the answer already was. He felt his eyes sting as he shook his head, choking on his words, "You- I-" The general took his free hand, looking at him firmly as her tone was soft but stern, "Tarak, you need to listen to my exact instructions. I want you to ride as fast as you can down the path. Do not trust anybody or stop for anything- you ride, and no matter who tries to stop you, you go all the way to Dunwich. You hide your crown, you don't tell anybody your real name or where you're from, and You wait for me there for one night and one day, and if I don't show up, you go and you forget about me. You ride, you keep riding even as the sunrises until there is a path that goes into the mountain cliffside. Knock three times, then whisper, 'Bubbly lavender stones.' Wait, and there should be a woman there to greet you- tell her Puffy sent you, understand?"

Tarak swallowed dryly, shaking his head, "I don't want to leave without-"

"Well you have to, else everything your mother is doing right now is in vain! I need to help hold them off, and if I make it out you will see me again, but just do this for me, okay?"

Tarak looked to the falling castle again, a single tear slipped down his face as he nodded solemnly, "O-okay..."

"Good boy..." Puffy smiled wearily before backing up and drawing her sword, raising it and bowing with glassy eyes, "And if you never see me again, it was an honor serving you and your mother, Prince Tarak."

Tarak nodded, taking deep, shaky breaths as Puffy turned and ran toward the fight. He grabbed the reins of the horse and wiped his eyes with his sleeve, before gently ushering the horse to go. Without hesitation, the horse went from a trot to a canter before finally galloping, Tarak's eyes focusing on the road as he left his beloved home behind.

=x=

Sapnap and Karl collapsed as the building behind them fell, coughing as they inhaled the slightly clean air. Karl looked back at it in shock, his heart breaking and eyes watering at the sight of the beautiful building and every bit of his life's work being burned to the ground making every part of him hurt.

Sapnap scrambled up, pulling Karl with him as he did so, "We need to hurry, it's only a matter of time before-" They turned and were immediately stopped by the sight of a group of the attackers approaching. The noirette growled under his breath before staring them down, holding an arm in front of Karl protectively, mentally counting the heads. There were six soldiers and two of them- and Karl didn't even have a weapon. He looked on every side of them, but they were cornered. Sapnap's heart sank, hands gripping his sword tightly.

They were so fucked.

"Surrender or be killed!" One of the men demanded. Sapnap glared, growling as he remained in a fighting stance, snapping back, "I'd rather die!"

The men exchanged a brief glance before beginning to charge- until one was suddenly shot in the head by an arrow and one of them screamed, running in the opposite direction. Sapnap and Karl jumped in surprise as a figure in a white cloak suddenly dropped down in front of them, large bird-like wings a snow-white color with silver feather tips stretching from under the cloak and shielding them. The person lunged forward, a rapier shining in his hand as he began to fight the sailors.

There was a flowing, graceful way the winged man fought, silent and focused- but in no time at all

the sailors were disarmed and dead on the ground. The man's wings folded behind his back, hidden under his cloak as he looked to them, silver, ice cold eyes piercing into Sapnap's soul. He lifted his rapier, pointing it to Sapnap, "You."

The noirette felt Karl latching onto his arm tightly, and he stared the man down in return as he continued, "You're from one of the ships, correct?"

"Yea, what of it?" Sapnap blurted out, and the man turned, marching up to them, "I'll escort you two there, but I want on."

"I'm not in charge of that."

"Do I look like a give a fuck who's in charge? I want a ride to the next kingdom. That's it."

Sapnap heard more buildings collapsing, and as he took in the man's placid, cold expression, he mentally apologized to Dream and grumbled out, "Fine."

"Then let's get going."

=x=

Techno and Bad made it to an area of the docks, and in the distance Techno could see "The Manhunt" preparing to sail. There were large groups of sailors blocking their way there, and Techno's stomach sank as he realized he wouldn't be able to fight through with Bad at his side. Looking to the water, he let out a shaky breath, "Bad, can you swim for it?"

"What?!"

"Can you swim for the ship!" He snapped, the siren flinching back, "I-i can try-"

"Then do it. I can fight my way through."

Techno had a bad feeling about this, but there was no other choice. Bad hesitated, but after a moment he nodded and took a running jump into the water, disappearing under the pitch-black water. Without hesitating, Techno charged at the sailors, built up rage being expelled as he cut and slashed his way through, in complete focus as fire burned through his veins. Every drop of spilled blood invigorated him more, strength building as it got slowly more easy to fight through.

A shrill, blood curdling scream cut through his focus and he turned, eyes widening as he saw a net of woven together golden chains hoisting Bad out of the water. There was steam rising from where the chains were burning him, his screams full of pure agony as he thrashed and writhed, trying to cut through the chains with his claws and spines as he was being hoisted over the side of another boat.

For a moment, Techno was frozen, his stomach churning as the screams were all too familiar. Fire burned like lava, spreading through his arms, legs, and even through his mind as it all began faster than he could stop it. Voices chanted in his mind something all too familiar in sync, bouncing in his skull as his skin and bones tore and snapped, his voice blurring as everything tinted red with blood.

Tusks sprouted from his bottom jaw, eye sight sharpening as he grew in size. Men around him screamed and scrambled away in panic as his godly form roared in fury.

Things around him devolved into madness as the sailors began to maul at each other . He threw those in his way aside, charging through the dock to the ship. Those still coherent shot him with bullets and arrows, the weapons not doing much but annoying him as he grabbed the railing and ripped it off the ship in anger. He climbed on and his hands snagged the golden net, pulling it until the gold snapped and Bad tumbled out. There were ugly burns on his back, arms, and tail from the chains as Techno picked him up, growling.

The voices began to scream to make them pay. Humans had almost destroyed something beautiful again. Humans *had* destroyed something beautiful. They were touching what their filthy hands were never meant to touch...

He was going to kill every last one of these fucks.

=x=

Sapnap was startled when they finally came to the docks. Everything was eerily quiet as mauled, dead bodies of sailors and the locals alike laid everywhere- blood splattered on walls and pooling on the stone brick road. He whispered for Karl to tread carefully, the man in the cloak walking

behind them silently- seemingly unbothered by the sight. Karl had his eyes shut tight, not wanting to see and simply letting Sapnap guide him.

Dream was waiting on the ship for them. He looked like he'd been through hell, hair and clothes tussled with his mask crooked. After seeing the stranger he gave Sapnap a pointed glare that told him to explain later, helping the three on after snipping, "Took you long enough."

Sapnap ignored him in favor of gesturing to the dead, "What the fuck happened?" Dream huffed, "Techno happened. He snapped."

"What? Wasn't he with-"

"That's the reason he snapped. Apparently, they put gold chain nets in the water to snag any mermaids trying to get away. Bad got snagged after Techno apparently told him to swim to the ship, and well..." Dream gestured to the dock, "You can see what happened when Techno saw."

Sapnap winced. Gold to sirens was like silver to werewolves. Mermaids liked gold, Sirens were burned by it, and so gold chain nets were multipurpose traps. Sirens couldn't slice through gold either.

He couldn't imagine the pain Bad was in right now.

Again.

"We need to get going. Get your little boyfriend below deck, same with- whoever the fuck he is-" He gestured to the winged man, "And then help get the sails up."

Sapnap looked at Karl sadly, tightly hugging him before ushering him below deck. The stranger followed and Dream walked to the helm with a deep, frustrated sigh, "Next stop, Darinsyth..."

Chapter End Notes

Just to note- no, Techno's little sister irl is not named Delilah- at least I don't think so, lol.

Dream is so done with everything right now.

Willow

Chapter Notes

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Apologies for such a short chapter, but I only really had two events to write and...well you'll see why :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tarak held the lantern high as he rode, focused on the path in front of him. He didn't know how long he'd been riding- he just knew he was riding through thick woods and could no longer see the moon in the sky.

His eyes suddenly snapped open as he saw a man standing in the middle of the path, and the horse suddenly skidded to the stop and reared up with a loud whinny, startling him.

The horse landed with a thud, seeming to freak out and hop a few more times, shaking its head as he pats its neck. He looked in front of him only to see the man was gone, confusion forming in him. Stopping, he slipped off the horse and looked around, shining the light in several directions. The trees around him were large but looked charred back and dead, while the area smelt of ash and soot.

He listened and heard nothing, much to both his relief and disappointment. Tarak walked out in front of the horse, surprised to see a smudged circle of something black on the path. Kneeling down, he inspected it, pinching a bit and rubbing it between his fingers, "It's...ash?"

He said curiously. Looking around, he spotted a letter half buried in the dirt and grabbed it. It looked horrendously old and worn, but as he opened it, he noticed the paper inside was remarkably intact.

He set the lantern on the ground and shook out the letter, the paper slipping out along with a small brooch. The brooch looked like one of two halves of what appeared to be a silver seashell with pearls, diamonds, and moonstones.

Unfolding the paper, he began reading.

"If you are reading this and there is a pile of ash nearby, then the chances are I am dead, and I have failed..."

He trailed off, eyes widening as he kept reading, "My name is Jack Manifold, as of currently I am the vessel for Helios. My one true purpose was to serve and protect the vessel of the Moon, but as of tonight, if I am dead, then I have failed. I thought it to have been safe. I never could have known of the keeper's intentions, but then again I should have paid more attention. The jewels allow us to spend much time apart, but the longer she's gone, the more I fear the worse. It's my fault- its all my fault, and I'll probably die out here knowing that. The heat is getting worse, and it's all I can do to hope for the best. My dearest sister and closest friend, forgive me, I am sorry..."

There is an unmistakable grief that fills him as he speaks, and it's then he hears a branch break in the distance. Tarak grabs his lantern and re-folds the letter, slipping it and the brooch in the satchel as he turns to the forest again. The floor is covered in shrubs and plants, and although he doesn't trust his own navigation skills, something inside him is pulling at him to follow the noise. Giving his horse a last cautious glance, he steps off the path and begins his trek through the forest, pulling out his only dagger and cutting X's in the tree's, quiet as he goes.

It isn't long before he stumbles upon a large pit in the ground, and as he shines his light he can see a rope tied to a tree that leads down into it. Curiosity overtaking common sense, he set down his lantern and grabbed the rope, tugging a few times to make sure it was sturdy. After, he steadily began scaling the side of the pit, climbing down until his feet could reach the bottom. Turning, he could faintly see a pile of dust, and the light of his lantern above reflected off of something.

Getting on his knees, he dug through the pile of dust and slowly pulled out a necklace, the chain freezing cold. There was a pendant at the end that looked like half of a fire, being gold while embedded with rubies and orange topaz.

"What...?"

Flipping it over, he read the engraving in the back. It was in small cursive and looked like an incomplete sentence, but he managed to make it out, "To Ophelia. Family is what..."

A young woman ran through the thick woods, barefoot as sharp stones cut at her feet. She gripped a cloak tightly and wore a long flowing white dress almost alike to a noble-woman's nightgown, her hair unruly as the wind blew hard. Tears streamed down her face as she kept looking behind her fearfully, one hand tightly wrapped around the necklace pendant that glowed like fire.

Standing slowly, he saw a long tunnel and walked down it, tucking the necklace in his pocket. He came to a large cave room and looked up to see moonlight peeking through a large hole in the ceiling, "Xisuma help whichever poor guy fell down here..."

Looking around, he didn't see any corpses or skeletons, so a small bit of him hoped that whoever had fallen had been the one that escaped using the rope. It didn't look like a fall that one could survive though- at least, not a human being.

Turning back, he looked around the main drop before climbing out again. He followed the X's to where he prayed his horse had stayed, and he sighed in relief at the sight of the stallion, "Thank Xisuma..." Walking over, he smiled and petted the horse's neck before gently resting his palm over its pulse. Feeling the equine's strong heartbeat under his hand relaxed him- almost bringing him a piece of mind.

The horse shook its head, snorting and digging at the ground with his front hoof as it looked at him. Tarak shut his eyes, taking a deep breath and releasing it. This felt like the only moment of peace he'd had in a while- since he'd ran, he hadn't stopped, meaning he'd been riding for almost two days straight now. He was sure the poor horse was exhausted from carrying him- he felt bad.

He looked at the saddlebag, seeing the nametag of "Ozzie" attached to it, and looked at the horse softly, "C'mon big guy, i'll just walk you from here- we've gotta be near a town, and hopefully we can rest and I can get you a nice meal." He walked to the side, taking out the necklace from his pocket. Staring at it, an idea clicked and he dug out the brooch.

Stepping away from Ozzie, he put down the lantern and held the two objects next to each other, and began to realize they were relatively the same size. He lined them up and smiled, feeling a sense of victory as that perfectly slotted together. Turning it over, he read out loud to himself.

"From Jack, to Ophelia. Family is what you choose, and in the end we chose each other."

Keeping the pendant locked together, he slipped it inside the saddlebag and took the horse's reins. With his other hand, he picked up the lantern and held it high again as he began leading the horse down the path, feeling almost as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders.

=x=

Eventually, after days of non-stop moving, they stopped and set up a brief camp by a lake. It had

begun to slowly become the tiniest bit warmer the further south they went, a bit of humidity hanging in the air. While it was still day, Schlatt had tossed Tommy and Tubbo some clothes and sent them off to find a spot to bathe in the lake- which both were thankful for.

They found a joint spot and Tommy let Tubbo go first, agreeing to stand watch for any danger as they chatted casually. Tommy leaned back against a swaying willow tree that hung over the lake bank. The older boy stopped as he heard something rustling in the distance, curiosity filling him, "Tubs, will you be okay for a few?"

"Hm? Well- sure, why?"

"I...wanna check something out."

He pushed off the tree and made his way deeper into the woods, following the noise.

And that was what brought him to where he was now.

Tommy stared at the mouth of the cave, quietly contemplating if this was a good decision or not. Well, it obviously wasn't, but Tommy had never really been the best at making good decisions or practicing caution.

There was a low hiss from inside the cave and he tensed, stepping back as he narrowed his eyes at the cave.

It...was a snake. Just a stupid, harmless little snake.

In the distance, Tommy brushed off the sounds of bones rattling off in the distance. He knew what it meant, of course- just another one of the superstitions that Tubbo believed in. A warning of rapidly approaching danger.

Well, if that danger was just a little snake, Tommy figured there wasn't much danger at all.

Tommy relaxed and sneered, looking around and picking up a rock, chunking it at the snake. It hit the snake dead on and Tommy winced, feeling a bit bad. He hadn't meant to hit the snake itself, just the ground by it to scare it off. He opened his mouth, about to apologize out loud to the reptile.

Until there was a deep growl.

He froze at the sound of claws scratching against stone, the snake rising off the ground as the thing stood and slowly turned around, his eyes widening as he saw two pairs of glowing eyes glare back from inside the cave, and at that moment his stomach dropped as he realized that *that wasn't just a fucking snake*.

He'd thrown a rock at a fucking *Chimera* .

Without a second thought, he turned and booked it the way he'd came. Seconds later the chorus of a roar, a bleat, and hissing behind him as it chased after. Blood suddenly rushed to his ears, heart thundering in his chest as he ran as fast as he could, his mind racing in panic.

His heart stopped as he was tackled, pain exploding through him as he felt it dig its claws through his clothes and into his skin. Tommy screamed bloody murder as those same claws felt like knives slicing down his back as he desperately thrashed, feeling crushed under the weight of the Chimera. It only applied more weight and he felt like he couldn't breathe, hyperventilating as all he felt was pure agony from the monster tearing his flesh and breaking his bones. Burning sensations filled his every sense- his muscles becoming weaker by the second.

He let out a choked scream, eyes snapping open as it roared and sunk its teeth into his neck and-

A crack ever so softly rang through the forest.

Chapter End Notes

100% expecting my kneecaps to be stolen rn. But remember y'all...ain't no major character death tag :)

Red Camellia, Sage, & Oak

Chapter Notes

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Tumblr: fantasticalbee

Any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on tumblr, Instagram, or on discord! For insta:

The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, but I'm seriously new to Instagram and don't know much about it so bear with me. My @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

TW FOR THIS CHAPTER FOR SLIGHT GORE VIA TALKING ABOUT TREATING BAD WOUNDS.

Callout time. Y'all know on the discord server these mf's named the Chimera "Christopher". My server is full of Christopher apologists and I am just sitting here like what the hell is happening.

Join the discord fic y'all, and you guys will all get to experience the torment my own readers decided to inflict upon me daily and maybe will even join in on. /hj

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Will he be alright?" Techno's question is short and to the point. Shortly after they'd boarded, Sam had taken Bad from him to start tending to his wounds. The man, known as "Ponk," seemed surprised at the sight of the wounded siren, and immediately offered up to help Sam.

It turned out that Ponk was a trained medic and the woman, Hannah, knew healing magic. At first, Techno was reluctant to leave Bad's side, but Ponk was quick to insist he would be a distraction to Hannah and himself, and after a bit of reassurance Techno finally gave in and sat out.

"He'll be fine. Just needs some good rest, good food, and lots of time to heal." Hannah responded, her voice coming out smoothly. She dipped her hands in a bucket of clean water, the fresh blood clouding it as she scrubbed calmly. "Healing magic can only do so much, despite common belief it isn't an immediate cure-all- it's a process. All my magic does is help stave off infection, and quicken the process as well as make it go smoother..." She shook her hands dry and turned to him, and the moment she met his eyes, there was not single doubt that she was fully genuine, "The gold left deeper, worse burns in some parts of his tail, arms, and back, but the burns on his chest were largely shallow and easier to deal with. The most he has are third degree burns, but on siren skin that isn't as bad since it's tougher and inherently a bit leathery. For those burns, Ponk had to slightly cut off the dead layer of skin for the proper layer to start healing..." Hannah trailed off, her eyes becoming a bit sadder, "But for his tail it was a lot more...complicated...I'm not sure you want to-

"Tell me." Techno bit, slightly regretting it as Hannah flinched before sighing, "Bad's tail is made up of a more tougher and armor like version of shark skin- all sirens are like this, while mermaids have softer fish scales and such. It's harder to pierce and get to the soft flesh under it, which is perfect for vicious fighters like sirens. However, when burned, the burned area will likely push in a

bit- depending on the pressure applied at that moment- and the soft skin under it will burn and cook a lot easier than the skin of the upper half...but the issues lie in the fact that unlike mermaid scales, siren scales don't flake off a bit to expose the flesh layer..." Hannah looked a bit like she was sick just thinking about it, having to take a deep breath before continuing, "So what happens is that we can't properly treat the skin under with the scales in the way, and the small crevices in between siren scales are a major breeding ground for bacteria- I'm sure you might have seen Bad clean his scales at least once, siren's often help clean in groups..."

Briefly, Techno thinks back to what Bad was doing at the bathhouse, but he doesn't do more than nod in understanding as Hannah kept going, "Leaving the burns under the scales would leave a major risk for horrible infections in a burst burn blister-"

"Get to the point, please."

"We had to pull a lot of his scales to reach the hurt skin underneath, He won't be able to swim for a long while..." Hannah swallowed, looking sympathetic, "And if the wounds don't heal properly...perhaps even never again- or at least not the same as before. In his human form, his legs might give him a bit of trouble. Not quite newborn baby deer level, but there will be some times where his legs might just randomly give out under him if carrying something heavy, or he might have trouble stopping himself from falling from tripping."

Techno's heart stopped, throat tightening as he found himself speechless. The door opened and Ponk stepped out, his eyes resting on the two, pain obviously evident in his strained eyes, "Han, did you...?"

Hannah nodded, and Ponk sighed in relief, "Bad should be stable for now, but he's asleep. You can go in and see him and wait till he's awake but...both me and Hannah agree that as his partner, you should perhaps be the one to tell him."

Techno looked at him with surprise before shaking his head and protesting shakily, "You...I-I think you're misunderstanding, he's not- I'm not his partner. I'm just..." The word caught in his throat, and he became slightly confused as his heart slightly ached as he forced it out, "I'm just his friend."

Ponk and Hannah exchanged a look of confusion before Ponk apologized, "My mistake- he was whimpering and asking if you were okay after he woke up the first time, so I guess we wrongly assumed. Still, he did want to see you, so you should at least see him." Techno nodded, tacking on, "I know he's very close to Sapnap, so that might be your best bet..."

Ponk gave a hum of acknowledgement, "Still, you telling him might be the best bet. Sam says you

two seem close- it's your call." He washed his hands in the same way Hannah did before walking around Techno, and as Hannah followed she passed him one more sympathetic look before he was left alone.

Taking a deep breath, he approached the door and opened it, slipping inside the room as he saw Sam gently wiping a damp towel on Bad's forehead. Sam passed him a glance before standing up straight, and Techno's heart ached as he took in Bad's state.

There was a large circular bandage on his cheek, clean silk bandages all around his arms, and torso- a few already being bled through. His tail hung past the edge of the bed, and there were clear patches of where bunches and lines of scales had been taken out. The flesh underneath the scales looked bumpy and was covered in popped blisters and an irritated red hue. For a second, maybe more, Techno eyed Bad's chest anxiously, only relaxing once he saw it rise and fall with a breath.

Sam seemed to be finished up, packing the medical supplies away precariously and nodding to Techno before leaving him alone in the room. The god walked over, taking a seat by the bed. It was strange to see Bad's siren form on land like this- he looked far more menacing and dangerous than Techno was used to with Bad. From the top of his head to the very end of his tail fins, Techno gathered that he had to be a little bit over nine feet in length, though three fourths of that was because of his tail.

Techno hesitated for a moment, his eyes stopping on Bad's open palm. There was an odd twisting feeling in his heart, and instinctively he looked at his own hand, clenching his fist a few times as his leg bounced a bit anxiously. Voices hissed in the back of his mind, "This is your fault."

"You should have stayed with him."

"He's hurt because of you."

Techno growled, shaking his head before resting one hand over Bad's, hunching forward to rest his head on his other arm. Just like Hannah had said, the skin was...leathery, almost. Like a leatherback sea turtle.

Bad looked peaceful- content in his slumber, as if nothing was wrong with him aside from the bandages and burns. He hummed lowly, suddenly more relaxed as he sat by Bad's side. Something in his chest squeezes, warmth swelling in it as he sat there.

When he'd seen Bad in that net, he'd felt enraged like never before. At that moment, he didn't care about exposing himself as a god- he only cared that Bad was in agony and being taken from him. He couldn't quite pinpoint why he felt like this, but as he shut his eyes his mind went back to the first time they'd met, the conversations they'd had, the first time training and the fact that Bad seemed so determined to prove himself to be just as strong as the others.

Techno wasn't exactly fond of the idea that just because you were more delicate or precious looking you couldn't fight- hell, he could rant for hours on the idiotic notion that women weren't meant for battle- so he liked that Bad was determined to learn how to fight on land and that he didn't give up easily. The knowledge that Bad had survived as long as he did against all odds proved that beyond a doubt that he was a fighter.

That being said...Techno opened his eyes just a slight bit, crimson orbs landing on the sirens battered tail solemnly as a memory came back to him.

"You can't fly?"

"Mhm. And even now it's still freshly strange to me too."

"Why?"

Phil paused, seeming lost in thought as he stared into the setting sun. The wind ripped around them, making Devlin shudder as he pulled the fur cloak more securely over his body and wisps of hair blew in his face. Phil seemed un-bothered though, despite the loose, thin layers of his clothes clearly being meant for warmer weather. He took a deep breath before releasing it, turning back to the path and continuing walking, "Devlin...think about it this way; the hind legs of a jack rabbit, why are they important to the rabbit?"

"Simple. Rabbits are prey animals and their legs help them to leap and run from danger."

Phil hummed, "Good. Now, what happens when a Rabbit either loses its legs or greatly wounds them?"

*"Well..." Devlin thought long and hard about that one. The answer was easy of course, but it couldn't be **that** easy, so it was probably trick question-*

Phil laughed, shaking his head and looking at him with an amused smile, "It's as good as dead, Devlin. Don't overthink this too much," Devlin huffed softly, "So an avian without flight is as good as dead?"

Phil paused and shook his head gently, "Well, yes but no. That...that wasn't really the angle I was hoping you'd see, but...perhaps I've used the wrong example. Let me try again." He cleared his throat, "Royalty love cats, right? But cats are natural predators, so they have claws, and they- including even domesticated cats- have instincts to hunt and scratch things with those claws. And even when they are declawed, they still have that deep-rooted instinct to hunt. That's something they have in common with wolves and domesticated dogs as well; that instinct to hunt deep down that forever remains. It comes as natural to them as breathing air from the moment they are born. Do you understand what I mean?"

Devlin nodded, "So flight to an avian is deep rooted instinct. It's natural to them, so not having their wings and being rendered flightless is more strange than having them in the first place."

"There we go! You're getting it, mate!" Phil praised, flashing him a smile over his shoulder. Devlin felt a bit of pride at that, but it was quickly simmering out as he thought deeper. The question was strained when he asked it, "You don't have to answer this but...do...you remember what flying felt like...?"

Phil stopped dead, silent as he stared ahead. Aside from the wind, there was a heavy hush that fell between them, and suddenly Devlin began to regret asking as he tried to stumble out an apology, "L...like I said, you don't have to answer! It's ah...it's just a curiosity." his voice died in his throat as Phil slowly turned to him, a sad smile on his face as he looked solemn, "Your fine, Dev. I'm not upset." He exhaled as he began, turning to the side and walking forward a bit to look out over the cliff side they were walking along, back to the sunset. His skeletal wings creaked softly as he extended them, his voice fond as he spoke, "Flying was like...pure freedom. Flying above the clouds...it's nothing but calm and quiet; serene and beautiful...hundreds and thousands of feet above the ground makes you feel so untouchable by everyday life- like you're above it all. It's the wind in your face and the fresh, crisp air in your lungs...It was where I was at my calmest and most carefree...it used to be everything to me, and I used to spend every moment I could soaring through the open skies. Like a small fish smiling through the giant expanse of the open ocean, a mermaid in a lagoon, a siren swimming through rough seas, a dragon in a lair of gold and jewels, and a faerie in the woods; it was always the one place that I felt like I was meant to always be..." He trailed off, eyes becoming downcast, "I used to tell myself that nothing could ever separate me from my wings. That the moment I'd lose my wings, I'd lose myself..."

Devlin's eye's settled on Phil, and suddenly, for the first time since they'd met, he saw not a feared warning of death, nor a final powerful judge of souls, or Keralis's right hand...but a tired old man who longed to rest his weary soul, but never would.

*"Then...how **did** you lose your wings..."*

Phil let out a soft, tired chuckle, and he looked at Devlin over his shoulder again with a gentle smile, "Sometimes, Devlin...you find something that you'll realize means more to you than all the money or power in the world, and sometimes being able to have it means making sacrifices you never imagined you would make before."

Techno gripped Bad's hand just the slightest bit tighter, pressing two fingers down on the underside of his wrist to feel the faint pulse as reassurance. Phil's words from so long ago rang in his mind faintly- a mere memory returned and settled in.

Bad...felt important to him. He wasn't sure in what regard, but he just felt important.

Techno decided to settle on that word for that warm feeling for now. Bad was important to him- and slowly but surely, he'd figure out why eventually.

=x=

His worn fingers ran through soft hair as he sat in the dark room, heart beat steady and quiet in his ears as he tenderly plucked out flowers intertwined in each section of the braid. The light of the full moon bounced off the pale yellow locks, giving them an almost glowing appearance and making it easy to sift through even in the dark room.

"...Toms?" Came the others soft whisper, low as to avoid waking the other kids in the room. Tommy let out a content hum, "Hm?"

There was a long pause that made the golden blond stop momentarily, peeking around to see that Tubbo was fiddling with something in his hands, eyes locked on the item dreamily. He finally spoke up, "I met a boy today."

Tommy felt an amused smile grace his face, going back to back he was doing, "Oh yeah? Might that be who you ditched me for at the fesitval and the reason you got all these dumb flowers in your hair?" The jab was light hearted, of course. He was happy Tubbo had actually enjoyed the festival for once, as he usually just followed Tommy around as usual rather than taking part in any games. The two of them lived in a fishing town, and once a year before the first fishing voyage of the spring season, the town had always held a festival in Amusix's name, hoping to get the sea

faring god's blessings for the year.

"Mhm. He was real nice. Talked and dressed kinda funny too, but a good kind of funny. He spoke all proper-like but wasn't rude or anything. I could tell he was a noble but- not like a snobby one." Tommy hummed, plucking another flower and almost being done with the braid, "Think you've found that fuckin' prince charming you've been on about for years now?" He teased, and Tubbo face turned pink as he covered his mouth with his empty hand to muffle a loud snort, "Shut up..." He giggled. Every since they'd turned ten, the two of them had started sharing each other's dreams about a significant other in the future- joked about what they'd look like, sound like, act like...

Tommy was pretty sure he'd want to marry a girl who was hard working. Who'd get his sense of humor and who was tough enough to hold her own but with a kind heart. He wasn't quite sure on the looks part though, to him all girls looked quite pretty in their own ways. Tubbo however had no real ideal in mind, and so they had joked he wanted to marry a prince like the one in their storybooks. It was...an odd want, but Tommy never had judged him on it, as he used to gush about getting a princess of his own someday too. Tommy grinned, "What? I'm just asking. You sound all love-sick an' shit." Tommy paused, before tacking on playfully, "It's gross."

"I've only met the guy once, Toms- besides he's leaving tomorrow anyway and I doubt he'll even remember my name." There's a bit of disappointment in his voice, and Tommy huffed, "He's an idiot if he doesn't."

Comfortable silence settled between them as he finished, and Tubbo looked at him, "Tommy...you won't leave me right?"

Tommy's grin softened, and he scooted around to loop his arm around Tubbo, "Course not. We live together and we'll die together, right? Us against the world."

"Even if you find someone and I don't? Or the other way around?" Tubbo tacked on.

"Even then, Tubs."

Tubbo smiled softly and returned the hug happily.

"..om...y"

"Tom...y"

"Tommy!"

Tommy groaned as he woke, body aching in pain as he tried to move. His entire body felt like it had been stung by a million needles, and when he took a breath his senses were immediately taken over by the smell of ash, smoke, and even charred flesh. He coughed, throat feeling dead dry, as he felt hands turning him on his back. He squinted, seeing Tubbo looked down at him, face tear streaked and twisted in concern as his mouth was moving but it was as if they were underwater.

"W...what?" He croaked out- and suddenly it was like somebody shot a gun by his ear. He shot up and cried in pain, a massive ringing in his ears feeling like it was bouncing everywhere in his skull, shaking his head wildly. He felt a hand on his back and after a few it began to lessen, leaving him shaking and panting. Feeling something cold press against his lips, he grabbed it and tilted his head back, letting out a satisfied groan as he felt cold water slide down his throat. As his hearing cleared up, he heard Cap's voice by him, "Tommy what happened, are you alright?"

"What the fuck happened here?" Schlatt muttered out loud.

Looking ahead, his vision began clearing and his eyes widened, stunned by the sight in front of him. The entire area looked like it had been lit up in a controlled flame, the trees charred black and smoldering while ash covered the dirt. All around him, the dirt was slathered in darkened, dried blood, and just a few feet from him laid the charred, smouldering remains of the Chimera.

Then he registered his own state of dress. Looking down, his vest and shirt looked like they had been torn and clawed through, but...he didn't feel anything. Other than the dryness, he felt fine.

And...he didn't know what had happened.

All Tommy knew was by some miracle, he was alive...

Then it clicked with him.

Had he ever really died in the first place?

=x=

It wasn't long until he'd found a town, and immediately Tarak found a tavern, and tied up Ozzie. Patting the horse's neck, he took the book, the letter, the pendants, and a pouch of gold coins from the saddle bag before heading in. He approached a man at the bar, taking a few gold coins out of the pouch, "Excuse me..."

The man looked up at him and he continued, "I was wondering if you had a room open for the night?"

Sighing with exhaustion, the man held up his hand and reached under the counter, taking out a book and a feather quill. He flipped it open, dipped the quill in an ink pot, and looked at Tarak.

"Name. One night is one gold, five shillings for breakfast in the morning."

Instinctively, he opened his mouth to reply, only to stop short.

"Don't tell anybody your real name."

He searched his mind, faltering as the man raised a brow slowly- until finally a name clicked.

"Ranboo." He stated nervously, hiding his fidgeting hands under his cloak, "My name is Ranboo."

The man stared at him for a second before sighing, jotting it down in the book as Tarak set two gold on the counter. The man called one of the barmaids to take *Ranboo* to his room, and he followed quietly.

Ranboo .

He'd...have to get used to using that.

Chapter End Notes

Hey.

Pssst!

If you like my book, then you should check out "Soldier, Bard, Imperial, and Lost Boy" by a close friend of mine [im_a_fandom_trashpanda](#). Their writing is amazing. They put so much work into that fic, and it makes me sad how incredibly underrated their fics are. Please do me a favor and go check it out, because they really deserve the love.

Link to "Soldier, Bard, Imperial, and Lost Boy" :

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/28382505/chapters/69542106>

(P.S. Blue, if you're reading this, take the damn clout. I know you never asked for it but I'm giving it to you anyway because you deserve it you darling British voidling. <3)

Daisy, Orange Blossoms, Purple Hyacinth, & Crab blossom

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

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Long chapter, wild rides to be had?

TW FOR GROTESQUE DESCRIPTION, GASLIGHTING, AND MANIPULATION.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Only Tommy, Tubbo, Quackity, and Schlatt sat around the fire as Slime and The Captain slept in their respective spots. Tubbo was fast asleep, cuddled into Tommy's side as he softly snored, and Quackity was quietly plucking away at an old guitar that Cap had given him, re-tuning it. Tommy chewed slowly on a piece of warm bread, happy to just have something in his stomach, but uneasy as the tense air around them refused to let up.

"So..." Schlatt spoke slowly and quietly, as to not wake the others, "We gonna talk about earlier?" Tommy tensed, his eyes flickering away as anxiety gnawed at him. After a moment, he swallowed the bread dryly and murmured, "No..."

"Really? Because I would really like to talk about it."

"Well I don't fuckin' want to." He snapped. Schlatt looked a bit taken aback before sighing, rubbing his eyes, "Look, kid, we found you after putting out a massive fire, your body completely unscathed. Except for your clothes ripped through and blood stained, and burned to a crisp Chimera nearby. You can't expect me to just let this go, do you?" His voice was tired and raspy yet soft. Like he was trying to be as gentle as his patience would allow. Tommy frowned deeply, shaking his head, "Look I- I don't know. I couldn't explain it even if I wanted to, its super fucking fuzzy n' all I know is one minute I was running from the Chimera and then the next I woke up with Tubbo over me."

"There's just a chunk of memory gone? The fuck?"

"Yea. I-I don't get it either- I have an excellent memory. It's not like me to just...blackout and forget something so vital..." Tommy had a bad taste in his mouth. He didn't like forgetting things- no matter how minor.

"I-" He tensed as Tubbo shifted beside him, murmuring something softly before letting out a

breathy giggle, a content smile spreading across his face. Looking down at him, Tommy felt himself relax, a small smile gracing his own lips, "That's funny..."

"What?"

"Tubbo's talking in his sleep. He's usually a pretty motionless and quiet sleeper- it has given me a few scares thinking he's died before. Lately he's been sort of an active dreamer I guess."

"Maybe it's the thing I gave him." Schlatt chuckled, and Tommy snickered as the air around them settled, "Maybe..." He popped the last piece of bread in his mouth and searched his pocket, fishing out the small flower brooch and turning it in his hand again. Quackity eyed it, noticing the way the teen's brow knit together in slight frustration and smirking.

"You haven't figured it out, have you?" He spoke up with amusement for the first time that night. Tommy looked at him with surprise before huffing, blowing a few wisps of hair out of his face,

"Maybe..." Quackity set the guitar and scooted over, "You know how to use magic, kid?"

"Yes?" The lie was obvious, his voice pitching at a question and Quackity snorted with a roll of his eyes, "Yea, sure. You don't have to lie to me, you know, most humans don't learn it unless they want to." He took Tommy's hand and closed the teen's fingers around the brooch, bringing the closed fit over his heart, "Here, Relax your body, try focusing your energy into it."

"How the fuck do I do that?"

"Try listening to your heartbeat. It's steady. Time your breathing, close your eyes, and listen to only the nature around you...then think of a fond memory that's clear in your mind. When you think you have a strong grasp on it, say this word for word; *veni ad me, te arcesso* ..." Tommy looked at him strangely, surprised by the flawless switch between his words.

"What was that?"

"Latin. I know three languages; spanish and english for everyday, but Latin for magic use."

Quackity shrugged before smiling, "You might not think you can say it, but those who were born with magic in their hearts usually will know the pronunciation by heart the first time. It's like a special advantage, think of it as the great gods' gift." Tommy sneered at the mention of the gods, "No offense, but I don't really believe in the gods. But sure." He huffed before thinking back to what he said. It was odd instruction, and he wasn't really having any faith in it but...it was worth a shot.

"Okay..."

He did as told as Quackity backed off. He tried to steady his breathing and shut his eyes, attempting to settle himself. He focused on the world around him, the crackling fire, the crickets chirping, Tubbo's soft breathing, the steady, timid beating of his own heart...

He racked his brain for memories until he could find a fresh, fond one.

“Butterflies drink blood y’know.” Tubbo chirped. The two of them laid on their bellies in the lush green grass, watching as a monarch butterfly slurped up the nectar of the flower it perched on. Tommy’s eyes lit up, “Woah- really?”

“Mhm. It’s really cool.”

Tommy gawked at the butterfly, amazed that such an elegant and lovely creature would drink such a vile substance.

“What do you know about moths?”

Tubbo perked up, raising a brow, “Moths?”

“Yea, they’re cool too...”

“Well, some moths don’t have mouths...” Tommy focused on the butterfly, practically entranced as Tubbo spoke, his mind soaking up the information.

Tommy felt a gentle gust of wind hit his face, the brooch in his hand heating up significantly and chest swelling. It felt like something was forming within his ribcage, moving around and fluttering wildly as if wanting release.

His lips moved and the words rolled off his tongue effortlessly, “ *Veni ad me, te arcesso.* ” He felt a sudden tug and the air was knocked from his lungs, making him sharply gasp as his eyes snapped open.

What he saw astonished him.

Fluttering around, circling the bonfire with a trail of sparks following behind it...was a large, odd looking moth. Schlatt watched with equal astonishment while Quackity smirked, eyes sparkling with pride as he looked at Tommy, “And that is how you summon a low-level, item bond familiar.”

“A *familiar* ?” Tommy choked out, shaking his head, “No- no way, only witches an’ other magic users get this type of thing-”

“That's a stereotype from stories, kid. If you have the right spell and an item bond to find it, you can summon a low-level one. Though admittedly, low levels aren't as cool or powerful as one you might get through a proper ritual- but you don't have nearly the right amount of training to do that.” Quackity hummed, “Put the brooch away and hold out your hand.”

Tommy did as told eagerly, and the moment he stretched out his hand, the moth fluttered over and landed on it, its beady eyes locking onto his. It felt incredibly warm, it's fluff a dark paynes grey with various patterns in blackish brown and pure black. A glow yellow dot resided in the center of it's forehead, and he could barely make out the underbelly being like the glow of a campfire.

It nuzzled in his palm and settled comfortably, and his heart swelled with undeniable affection for the moth.

Schlatt spoke up softly, smiling, “Well, you gonna fuckin' name 'em or not?”

Tommy kept staring a bit longer, blinking away his watery eyes and clearing his throat, “Well...I've always liked the name Clementine...”

The moth stared back at him and it's wings fluttered again, almost as if to approve of the name as Quackity picked up the guitar again, going back to fiddling with the guitar again, “Clementine it is then. Cute.”

Tommy brought the moth to his shoulder and Clementine crawled on and into the collar crook of his neck, almost like a puppy as it settled. Tommy choked up, feeling it's incredibly softness as it rested by his neck.

He would most definitely slaughter a nation for this creature. It was far too precious.

=x=

Tubbo woke up to the feeling of rocking, his eyes fluttering open to see the starry night sky above him. Sitting up, he groaned and rubbed his eyes free of sleep, looking around to see he was surrounded by water. Flowers of all colors were floating in the water, and across the water towered a volcano that spewed lava from its cap. It flowed down the sides, to the beach where it lapped at the ocean waves, a thick plum of white clouds arising from it.

Where he laid was a wooden platform similar to a small boat, the wood rough under his palms.
“Hello...?”

He jumped, looking around wildly as he tried to figure out where the voice had come from. Eventually, his eyes locked on someone staring at him from across the water, standing on a large flat rock on the beach- but they were so far, too far to have been the voice...right? He opened his mouth to speak, but nothing came out, leaving him further confused.

“I...I can’t talk? Why?”

*“I’m not sure, but I can’t either.” Tubbo gave another start, now able to pinpoint that the voice was an echo in his mind, “**Shit- you can hear my thoughts?**”*

“Mhm. And it seems you can hear mine...”

*Tubbo slowly stood, trying to balance himself with shaking legs. He looked down at the flowers in the water quizzingly, “**Should...we try to get to each other...?**”*

“I’m not sure- I’m surrounded by lava, but there's some oddly colored flat rocks that I think I could step across...”

“Oddly colored?”

“Yea...some black like coal, others rusty red, a few orange, and some yellow...”

*Tubbo’s eyes lit up, an idea came to mind, “**Wait, it’s the same over here- just with flowers. Do they look like they’re in a pattern?**”*

*He heard a soft gasp in his mind, “**Woah- I think you’re right...**” Tubbo grinned victoriously, his eyes scanning the patterns, his mind playing connect the dots with the matching flowers. Puzzle pieces clicking in his mind, he made up his mind, “**It looks like a game I used to play at the orphanage called the golden road. The ladies would set up a large area where there were two sides, one of rocks and the other of flowers. Two people would have to follow by only stepping on the path, which would lead a dance until they met in the middle. It helped with our balance a lot, since you’d lose if you fell.**” Tubbo kept his eyes on the yellow flowers, “**You follow the common color thread. The most common thread for myself is the yellow flowers.**”*

“Same for me, just yellow rocks...”

“It’s less dangerous for me, so I’ll go first...just in case I’m wrong.” Tubbo hesitated, gulping nervously before slowly taking his first step forward. He cautiously applied his weight onto the golden bloom, holding his breath as he prepared to fall right into the water.

Relief filled him as the bloom grew and the water around it glowed a beautiful cerulean blue as a soft chime rang through the air- like a musical note. He brought up his other foot and it fully supported his weight, allowing him to stand solidly on it, **“It worked!”**

“My turn then...” He looked up to see the other teen take a cautious step forward, slightly wobbly and awkward at first as he stepped on what Tubbo could only hope was the first yellow stone.

After a moment, the yellow rock turned into a hunk of white and the lava around it solidified to be a dark black as a slightly deeper note played. He steadied himself and looked up to Tubbo, **“ I think it's a song- you said the game involved moving like you were dancing, we might have to move in sync so the notes play in sync.”**

“That would make sense...count of 3 and hope for the best?”

A soft laugh rang pleasantly in his head, **“Sounds good...”**

Together, the two of them counted to three before moving in sync to the next step. The notes played together as they spun and hopped, completely focused as they made odd twists and turns until it almost felt like they knew the moves by heart.

Without thinking, as the flowers and rocks started to collide, Tubbo slid his hand into a larger one and twirled before being pulled in, his hand going to the person's shoulder. No longer paying attention to where he was stepping, he looked up at the other with surprise. He recognized the dirty blonde hair and was shocked to see his face was now clearer than in his last dream. The other teen looked surprised too, and almost in sync the same thought echoed in their minds.

“It's you-”

Both of them blinked in surprise before laughing awkwardly, smiles strained before a deep rumble was heard. They held onto each other as their platforms began to shake, a golden platform rising under their feet and lifting them into the air as its sides opened up shaped like the petals of an orange blossom. The petals slowly rotated around them as the melody they had played through their paths rang in the air- reminding him of a music book.

Tubbo watched in amazement, a giddy smile on his lips as it unfolded around them. Finally, he looked back to the other boy, a slight feeling of electricity and warmth where their fingers were interlaced, **“I don't believe I got your name last time, did I?”**

He registered the other boy's pleasant smile that seemed to follow through into grayish blue eyes, then the slight hesitation as the smile faltered, **“I...you can just call me Ranboo,”** A question seemed to be lingering at the tip of his tongue, and eventually he spit it out, **“Are...are you real?”**

Like- are you part of the dream, or..."

Tubbo snorted, his shoulders visibly shaking as he laughed in his mind, "Well, If I was a part of the dream, I wouldn't tell you now would I?" Ranboo's lips pursed and he rolled his eyes, "Well, true..."

Tubbo's grin grew wider, "I'm pretty sure I already told you this, but I'm Tubbo." Ranboo gave a gentle smile, his eyes softening as if he was trying to memorize the name internally before humming, "Well, You are a very good dancer Tubbo." Tubbo smirked, "Why thank you..." he started, before stating cockily, "You could use some work."

Ranboo gave a mock offended look, "How dare you."

"It's the freakishly long legs. Try shrinking."

"So rude. I can't believe this."

They stared a second more before breaking, unable to contain their laughter at the ridiculousness of their situation. Here they were, both asleep and in a dream that they were somehow sharing with somebody they barely knew- and yet, their banter felt almost natural. Like age-old friends meeting once again after so long, it felt like they'd known each other for thousands of years- and hell, maybe they did and they just didn't know it.

"You're a funny guy."

"Thank you, I..." Ranboo trailed off as Tubbo's face screwed up, letting go and holding his head as he felt suddenly dizzy. Reaching out, Ranboo worriedly pulled him in and settled them to sitting on the small platform, "What's wrong?"

Tubbo groaned as the lightheadedness got worse, now able to hear muffled voices, "I-i- fuck I think 'm waking up..." He slurred. His heart ached as he registered the magical world around them beginning to fade, not ready to leave just yet. He looked to Ranboo, who looked genuinely concerned as he watched Tubbo himself begin to disappear, "Jus...Just like last time- we'll see each other again right?"

Something flickered in Ranboo's eyes as he gained a look of determination, nodding, "Hopefully, sooner than you think."

Tubbo's brow knitted in confusion, "Wha...?" but it was too late. In a moment's notice, the world around him was consumed by the blackness of a void.

Tubbo groaned as his eyes fluttered open again, this time wincing at the blinding light of the campfire, “Well, look who’s awake...” He heard Tommy’s voice and whined, pouting, “I was having a good dream-” He sat up and looked to see an odd looking moth on his friend's shoulder, gawking, “Woah.”

Tommy grinned from ear to ear, “Well? Isn’t she fuckin’ cool?” He gently held out his hand and the moth crawled into his palm happily before turning to look at Tubbo, “Tubbo, this is Clementine. Clementine, Tubbo.”

Tubbo awed, cooing softly as he used his index finger to gently stroke the moths back, “Where did you find her?”

“That's the best part. Big Q taught me how to use the thing Schlatt got me- she’s my familiar!”
“A familiar?” Tubbo looked at Tommy with wide eyes as he nodded excitedly. It had been a while since he’d seen Tommy this excited, but the other boy really did like moths and this was something to get excited about. Tubbo chuckled and he gently punched Tommy’s arm, “Look at you. Soon you might be usin’ magic for real.”

“Gods that would be so cool- imagine, *me* with fucking *magic* -”

“A disaster.”

“Oi!”

Tubbo smirked, shrugging, “I only speak the truth.”

“Boys, keep it down, the others are still trying to sleep.” Schlatt butted in, tossing another log in the fire. They both murmured an apology and lowered their voices as Tommy finally asked, “So, what was so good about your dream?”

‘Everything...’ Tubbo thought to himself, but what came out was different, “I’m...not sure. I can’t remember now...”

“Damn. Bummer...”

“Yea...” Looking back into the fire, Tubbo nodded slowly, “Real bummer...”

=x=

As Tubbo disappeared, Ranboo was still left in the dream. He watched as the world around him began to collapse, and he couldn't even scream as he was plunged into darkness.

He hit the ground roughly, and as he scrambled to stand he found himself in what looked like a massive dark cave only dimly lit by torches on the walls. The deep rumble came again, and he looked around wildly before his eyes landed on a large creature curled up mere feet from him. It looked thirty times his size, its skin looking rough and leathery while the colors split down the middle, one half white as marble and the other black as the void. He was frozen in fear as its eyes opened, one eye as red as a ruby and the other like an emerald, narrowing onto him almost instantly.

A low hiss sounded and it slowly uncurled, showing it's practically skeletal, monstrous and disproportionate body and rearing its ugly head. He was filled with terror as a slit opened along its jaw, thin lips curling back and stretching against an impossibly large and razor sharp maw of teeth. Its maw opened to reveal a grotesque purple tongue that slipped out and licked at its thin lips-

Then it cackled.

The sound was somewhere between a cat being mauled alive, a deer screeching, and an in heat elk gurgling on its own blood.

***"I would ask if you think I'm beautiful, but your expression gives me that answer already!"** it howled, and Ranboo wanted to be sick.*

"W-what are you?!"

*It stopped immediately. It looked at him, its neck cracking as it tilted its head, **"What am I? I think the better question is who am I; and I, am you."***

*Ranboo felt ice go through his veins, **"W...what?"***

"Not an easy thing to take in, hm?"** It smirked, snickered, **"Humans are so fragile minded...what I mean is that we are one in the same, Tarak. You might want to deny that, but it's nothing but the truth."

*His heart sank, eyes moving to look at his hands as he shook his head, **"No...no your aren't real....this isn't-"***

“It is. Now...” Ranboo jumped as its face came level to him and it hissed, ***“Wake up.”***

Ranboo screamed, flailing as he fell out of the bed. His entire body trembled, unable to comprehend what he had just witnessed.

“Oi mate- you alright?”

Looking up, he came face to face with a translucent man in nicely tailored clothes looking at him with concern. Quickly, he swiped a hand out only for it to go right through the man's arm. Brain short circuiting, Ranboo's vision went black as he passed out again.

=x=

“I’m not so sure about this...” Skeppy’s stomach twisted uncomfortably as he held the vial of a sickly purple substance. He rolled it in his palm, turning to see the label on it as he held his precious sword in his other hand.

The name of the vile concoction was simple; ***Mors Vincit Omnia.***

In reality, he didn’t like this at all- after all, killing a *god* ? Something about that felt wrong, “You’re never sure about anything, that’s why I’m here to guide you.” There was something condescending in the way A6d patted his shoulder and spoke in an all too caring tone. A deep part of him wanted to turn around- tell A6d no and to finally let this all go. Bad was safe and happy, and that in the end was all Skeppy wanted to know to give himself peace. Really, in the beginning, that had been all his journey was about. Closure.

When had Bad become a possession to him? That question kept replying in his mind, making him sick to his stomach as he was reminded of his own words. Bad wasn’t his- he never was-....so when had he begun thinking he was?

When did the need for closure become such a fatal obsession? When had it become so bad he was willing to kill a god just to have Bad back? This- this wasn’t *him* . From the beginning, it had felt like an infection had been seeping into his mind, growing and slowly digging its vile roots deeper into him.

“Well?”

Skeppy could almost weep as he looked at the reflection in the sword, unable to recognize the man that looked back at him. The man in the reflection has lost the shine in his blue orbs, now dull and lifeless with bags under them from sleepless nights.

He felt himself frown, a single tear slipped down his face as his voice broke.

“I don’t think I can do this...”

A6d scoffed, tisking, “Really now? You’d give up just like that? I guess you don’t really love him then.”

That put Skeppy on alert, growling softly, “*I do* - but this- this isn’t the way-”

“Skeppy...” The demon's grip tightened on Skeppys shoulder, claws digging in, “This is the *only* way. How are you so blind- your pearl needs you, and yet your too much of a coward-”

“I’m not a fucking coward-”

“Yes you are! If you back down now, you are a damn coward. You understand? A fucking *coward*.”

The infection dug its roots deeper, and before Skeppy knew it, he uncapped the vial and poured some onto his sword blade. A6d smiled victoriously as he took the vial and recapped it, Skeppy completely unaware of the sadistic smirk growing on the demon's face as he used a thick cloth to spread the substance along his blade, tinting it a shiny translucent purple.

When finished, Skeppy looked over his work, bile rising in his throat as he remembered what A6d had told him.

One stab or cut, it made a god as weak and easy to kill as any mortal.

“Wasn’t that easy? Now all you need to do is go head to head, and you’re sure to win-” A6d tensed, cutting himself off. Skeppy looked at him, seeing an angered look across his face before he turned to leave, “Excuse me, I need to...tend to something.”

Without explanation, he stormed out, shoving past Spifey just as he entered. He cast the demon an annoyed look, “Geez...fuckin’ prick...” He muttered before looking at Skeppy. Almost instantly, his expression turned to concern as he took in the captain's appearance.

Skeppy slowly stood, setting down the sword on his desk as he tried to straighten himself out, “Spifey,” His voice came out weaker than he’d expected, “What is...” Without warning, his legs gave out and the other man quickly caught him, holding him up, “You look like shit- why the fuck are you so light?” He felt Spifey put an arm under his legs and pick him up, carrying him to his bed and setting him down, “I-I’m fine- just a bit sick, been that way for a while...” he murmured.

Spifey scoffed, “A bit my ass. You looked like shit before, but by Xisuma you look like you're dying now...” he growled.

“I-”

“Don’t you dare say you’re fine. Fucking shit...” Spifey sighed, “Last time I saw you leave this place, it was to go to the market- and that was days ago. How long has it been since you’ve eaten? Had some water? Slept?”

Skeppy’s silence was enough of an answer for him. Spifey frowned deeply, “Amusix- you're such a dumbass. Stay here, try sleeping, I'll make you something to eat.”

“But-”

“No buts, this stupid hunt can wait a bit. You can’t be a captain in this condition, I’m pretty sure you’ve got a high fever to make things worse.” He turned to the door, his original task forgotten as he left Skeppy in the bed. It seemed like his neglect towards himself had finally caught up to him after having to make such a highly stressful decision- and he figured he deserved it.

Reaching in his pocket, he pulled out the soft pink seashell again, staring at it with a deep frown before laying it on his chest and staring at the ceiling again, his entire body aching from exhaustion and one single thought in his mind.

Who even was he anymore.

=x=

Heavy footsteps echoed through the long winded stone corridors, fury running through his blood as he made his way to the chamber. He didn’t listen to the young werewolf’s cries to stop and listen from behind, in too much of a blind rage to care as he reached the chamber and pressed the stone to open it.

The moment the door was open, Wilbur’s smug smile met him.

“Ted, how nice of you to-”

The cocky harpy was promptly cut off by a punch to the jaw, the demon snarling as his mind was reverted to something feral at the sight of the Harpy. His tail whipped behind him as his eyes turned to slits, wrapped his hands around his throat crushingly as he screamed, “Where is he?!”

He loosened to let Wilbur speak, a glint of malice in the harpy's eyes and a weak but cruel and twisted smirk on his lips, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"You fucking-!!!" Ted pulled back his fist and punched him again, fury burning through him, "You are the only one who knew where his body was, and now he's alive and I can feel it! Where the fuck is he, bird bitch!!" He roared.

Wilbur only laughed as his nose bled and eyes watered. Without warning, he grabbed the back of Ted's head and smashed their heads together, temporarily dazing the demon before shoving him off. He stood shakily, snickering as the demon narrowed his eyes at him, "If he's alive, he's not here and I don't fuckin' know where he is, so you can fuck right off."

Ted growled, "Bullshit-"

His arm was grabbed and he was promptly pulled out of the chamber, the chained harpy wiping blood from his lip as the chamber was sealed.

"I know you're upset Ted, but you can't just go in there and beat him till he talks. Against the rules Phil set." Blop's voice was as monotonous as usual, completely unfeeling, "He brought back Charlie. My Charlie, my slime- I can't sit still any longer not knowing where he is, and Wilbur fucking knows where he is, I know he does."

"That doesn't change that it's against the rules."

Ted took deep breaths, trying to calm down, "Fucking- fine. I'll- I'll figure something out that isn't violent." He turned and trudged back down the hall, silently cursing the gods as he did.

He'd figure out a way, he guaranteed. He'd find a way, even if it killed him.

Chapter End Notes

I recently said this in my other fic, but I'll say it here too: I would like to mention that I do in fact like hearing from y'all in the comments or in the chapter discussion of discord. Positive feedback and constructive criticism do actually help a lot as well as give me motivation. Thank you <3

For those wondering what I based clementines design off of:
<https://princebunbuns.tumblr.com/post/171444184332/fire-moth-familiar>
ART IS NOT MINE ^^^^

Orange Blossoms

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

Any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on tumblr, Instagram, or on discord! For insta:

The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, but I'm seriously new to Instagram and don't know much about it so bear with me. My @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

No TW for this chapter- wait, no, brief talk about monster/hybrid racism of sorts.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next morning it was a clear, hot day with surprisingly calm waves. Dream had everyone gather on the deck, proclaiming it was important to straighten things out. When everybody was there except Bad, who was still dead asleep below deck, he started with what was most important, “It’s no secret that we have quite a few more people than initially planned for.” He gestured to their most recent passengers; Ponk, Hannah, Karl, and the man in the cloak. “Unfortunately, due to that and the suddenness of the attack, from what I’ve calculated; we don’t have enough rations to last all of us from here to Darinsyth in one trip. As much as it pains me, we are going to have to make a stop at Tinsley to restock supplies.”

There was a visible cloud of dread that went over those who knew what Tinsley was like, and Dream didn’t blame them. Tinsley was the polar opposite to Anadell, and considering that most of the crew were hybrids, it bothered them.

“I know, it's not ideal, but starving also isn’t ideal either. Sadly, it's something we have to do. This also means that we will be passing more closely to the Harpy nesting island on our way to Darinsyth, so that will be-”

“You mean the island of the Falsum Deus?” The man in the cloak interrupted, and Dream looked at him with a raised brow. The man continued, “The harpy nesting island isn’t referred to as that anymore, because Harpies stopped nesting there a good few years ago. Its new name is the Island of the Falsum Deus, translated to the island of the False God, though no one is sure as to why. It’s just what the islanders inhabiting it call it.”

Letting out a hum, Dream nodded and made a mental note of it, “Right. Then we’re going to pass closer to *Falsum Deus* on the way to Darinsyth than we expected. Any complaints?”

He was met by silence and only felt relief at that, “Great. Now, secondly to our ‘passengers’: I’m reminding you all that this is not a free ride. You all have to pull your weight like the rest of my actual crew, and do whatever chores or tasks I ask of you. If you have an issue with that you can throw yourself overboard and save me the trouble. This is not negotiable, and this concludes everything I needed to say. You all may go about your work.” His made his tone firm and commanding, trying to make a point that there was no question about this, before moving back to steering the ship.

Without complaint, the group all went in their separate directions on the ship. Techno went back below deck to check on Bad, Ponk and Hannah stayed to talk to Sam and Ant, George went back to the captain's cabin, and the cloaked man simply watched over the rail. After a few minutes, Sapnap came up to the wheel with Karl in tow, the two having large, giddy smiles that were so infectious that Dream couldn't help but give a small smile of his own.

In no time at all, Sapnap began introducing them to each other and the three began talking about various topics. Dream began to pick up easily on why Sapnap liked Karl so much. He was sweet and excitable, reminding him of a golden retriever in a sense.

Eventually, they came to the topic of swordsmanship and being able to hold one's own; and apparently, Karl knew a good bit. And that had gotten Dream thinking, his gaze flickered to the pair, and his eyes met Sapnap's in an almost insync thought.

"Say...Karl..." Dream started, getting the youngers attention, "We're still looking for a 4th member to participate at the Championship in Myschium." He smirked, "Think you can fill that spot for us?"

Karl's eyes grew as wide as saucers, his jaw dropping as he looked between Dream and Sapnap as if expecting this to be a joke, "Me? You...want me?"

"Why not?" Dream answered simply, "We'd need to properly test you first though, just to make sure you're really fit for it."

Karl's excitement was infectious as he started hopping a little bit, giggling, "Yes! Yes I'd love to! I just, I can't believe you'd want *me*-" Sapnap wrapped his arm around the other man, grinning,

"I told you he'd like you!" He pulled Karl in to peck his cheek, a goofy, lovestruck grin on both their faces as they suddenly became more occupied with each other.

Dream watched them for a minute before laughing and shooing them off, "Alright lovebirds, I'm trying to steer a ship, so take your gross mushy stuff some place else."

"Awww..." Sapnap snickered, "Don't worry, he's just jealous~"

"Am not."

The noirette took Karl's hand and started leading him away, calling back as they walked away,

“Are too~!”

Dream rolled his eyes before turning his attention back to steering, taking a deep breath, “Island of Falsum Deus, something tells me we might do a bit more than just pass by there..”

=x=

Ranboo groaned as he woke up on the floor, head throbbing. The sun’s rays slipped through the curtains of the room, a muffled chatter of an active tavern below the floorboards. He slowly got up, stretching out the stiffness in his body and rolling his neck before looking around. There wasn’t a trace of the man he’d seen just before fainting, making him wonder if he was merely hallucinating.

Reluctantly, he brushed it off in favor of his parched throat and growling stomach, remembering what Puffy had told him. Wait for her for a full day and a full night, and if she doesn’t show up, then to go without her.

He really hoped she would show up.

Gathering his stuff, he glanced at his crown, finding himself taking it and putting it on almost instinctively. Pausing, he shook his head and removed it, looking at his reflection in the red and green jewels, “No. You- you’re not a prince. Not anymore.” He tucked it away in his satchel alongside the book, “As of now, you’re a commoner. Not royalty. Shouldn’t be too hard to act normal, right?” He sucked in a breath and turned his head, registering his appearance in the mirror.

Even without the crown, he still looked higher than the rest. But it was better without the crown.

“Okay, I can do this. Just- occupy yourself by exploring, grab something to eat and drink, bring some good feed or grain for Ozzie, clean him up a bit, then go back to bed. And most of all; don’t draw attention to yourself. Not that hard...” Ranboo mumbled, slinging the satchel over his shoulder.

Walking out, he kept his head down as he made his way out of the tavern and into the now busy stone streets.

He got a young woman’s attention, asking directions to the market. The woman gave them snidely, before turning and remarking something Ranboo didn’t quite hear.

Wandering through the streets, he let his mind drift to last night. The first part of the dream felt unreal. Before, he had been convinced it was nothing but a weird dream, but now that felt like an unreasonable hope. That boy, Tubbo, his hand had felt so...real in Ranboo’s own. It was cool, solid but firm and completely grounding. The melody they played felt so familiar yet distant, too. How could something be so familiar yet so new- that feeling was like nothing else he’d ever known...

And that beast, too. Just the thought of it made his skin crawl, but what did it mean by “I am you”? The thought of such a thing being him in any way made him shiver...

He pulled himself to pay attention again as he reached the market, and his stomach growled loudly as the smell of fresh, warm food filled his nose. His eyes roved the market stalls until a stand selling small meat pies of different varieties caught his attention. Walking over, he looked around for someone at the stand only to find no one. His hand slipped into his satchel and he pulled out a gold coin, going to grab the pie and leave the coin in its place, only to jump as a cold hand grabbed his wrist, “I wouldn’t take that if I were you.”

Ranboo glanced down at the hand, eyes widening as he saw sharp claws and scales dusted across the hands and fingers. He looked to meet the eyes of the person, finding they were only an inch or so shorter than him, and was confused to find they wore odd looking glasses with the lenses tinted such a dark black that he could barely see their eyes, and the way that the cloak they wore casted a dark shadow over their form, “I-I’m...sorry?” He spoke nervously, unsure what he’d done wrong.

The person chuckled and let go of his wrist, hand retracting back under the cloak, “There’s nothing to apologize for, kid. I’m just warning you, the meat pies aren’t that good here.” Their tone was warm and inviting, and he could barely make out that they were smiling softly, “See, this village specializes in more fish-products since they live so close to the sea. Tuna, cod, squid- all that stuff. You’ll have a better meal if you order fish stew.”

A slow, grateful smile crossed Ranboo’s face, his nerves calming as he nodded and put away his coin, “Ah...Thank you. Is it obvious that I’m not from around here?”

“Kinda. Especially with how you’re dressed, yea, but I’m not from around here either.”

“Glad I’m not the only one. Thank you again!” He chirped, turning to leave as he decided to find a place that sold fish stew. He’d never had it, and it didn’t sound particularly pleasant, but it was better than nothing.

“YOU!”

Ranboo jumped at the anger in the gravelly voice that came from behind him. Looking back over his shoulder in fear, he saw a man- who he could only assume was the owner of the meat pie stand- was yelling at the cloaked stranger, who stood calmly and stared right back at him, “Sir, all I did was recommend something else, I’m really not causing any issues-”

“You are making me lose business!”

“I’m not-”

The man grabbed the front of the stranger's cloak, taking out a knife and pointing it at their throat, “You and your kind are nothing but fucking scum in this world, and you aren’t fucking welcome in this town! Hell, I should just kill you right fucking now and do the world a favor!!”

“Woah now- there’s no need to get violent-”

You and your kind.

Those words tore him apart the moment he heard them, remembering the stranger’s scaled hand. Ranboo looked around frantically, trying to see if anybody was going to help, becoming more upset as he only saw people glancing and turning their noses up or ignoring the conflict entirely.

His gut squeezed uncomfortably as he watched it unfold, discomfort and annoyance filling him as he tried to keep quiet. It wasn’t his business, he knows, and he needs to keep his head down- but fuck, he hates this. This blatant disrespect for another just because of something they couldn’t help being born as.

He was the prince of a kingdom and the son of a queen who actively preached the equal treatment of other species. He’d met people from all kinds of different walks of life, and it hurt to force himself to walk away after that person had shown him such kindness.

Head buried in his studies, Tarak jumped, startled, as his focus was broken by a sharp cry followed by the sound of wooden clattering and something smashing. Hurriedly, he stood up, following the sound of frantic scrambling and warbling sobs and bables.

Finally, peeking his head out between the bookshelves, he saw a male servant crying and scrambling to put pieces of what seemed to be a broken wine bottle and glasses onto a wooden tray, muttering “no” frantically. His uniform was clearly stained from the wine that was spilled all over the dark wood floor. Heart lurching as he watched him pick up the sharp pieces so hap-hazardly, Tarak quickly came out and rushed over, “Wait- stop you might-”

Just as he said it, he winced as he grabbed a piece only to yelp as he cut himself. He looked at Tarak with horror, fumbling apologies and begging for forgiveness, bowing uncomfortably to him despite his bleeding hand. Worriedly, Tarak shook his head frantically, “Hey- hey, sir look at me.”

“No! No I could never- looking at the young master is surely a punishable offense-”

“Master...?” Tarak spoke with confusion, before shaking it off and dropping down on his knees, staining his own pants in the wine. The servant let out a noise that sounded like a kicked puppy, looking him in the face.

Now able to clearly see the man's face, he was clearly in his thirties. There were deep, clearly newly healed scars across his face, he had a thick beard, messy hair, eyes that shined bright gold, and thick eyebrows. Semi-sharp canines stuck out a bit from a slight underbite, his large hands were very hairy with semi-sharp claws, and for the first time Tarak took note of two wolf-like ears in place of where human ears would be.

He was a lycan.

Tarak gave him what he could only hope was a reassuring, kind smile, and the man looked surprised, "Young...master...?"

"I'm not your master, and you didn't do anything wrong, okay?" He spoke softly, choosing not to touch the man, "You had a bit of an accident, but it was only an accident. This stuff is replaceable, and you're not in trouble because it clearly wasn't on purpose, understand?"

"B...but..."

"Go take care of your hand, take your uniform to the royal seamstress, and you can have the rest of the day off, alright? I'll call someone else to come clean the mess."

The man's eyes searched Tarak's face for any sign of deception, but eventually, he slowly and hesitantly stood up, nursing his hand, "Yes young master-"

"Tarak. I already said, I don't really like "master". The man nodded shakily, sniffing, "Th...than thank you, Tarak."

"It's no problem."

Later that night, he'd told his mother about what had happened. It was then that his mother had fully revealed how cruel the rest of the world was to those who were different. Those who didn't quite fit humanity's definition of right and normal.

How every day humans would rather feign ignorance than get involved in fighting the injustices, because it's simply easier. Why? Because she was a queen with power, she had chosen to start standing against the injustices, making their kingdom a safe haven for all species.

He didn't understand at first, too young and truly ignorant, but as he grew older, and began to go with his mother to other kingdoms for trades and discussions, he began to see what his mother meant.

And by walking away, he was choosing to take part in what his kingdom stood against. He was feigning ignorance, just like everybody else.

He couldn't do that.

Ranboo turned, shoving past people to get back to the stall, "Hey! What do you think you're doing?" He barked, immediately getting the owner's attention, "Yea, you! Unhand them!" He narrowed his eyes at the man, standing as tall as he could and trying to ignore the eyes boring into him.

Getting over his shock, the man narrowed his eyes back, growling, "And who the hell are you to tell me what to do?"

"Nobody. But how about this." Ranboo dug in his satchel and grabbed the gold coin, pulling it out and slamming it on the stand, "You let them go and forget this happened, and I'll give you this." He watched as the man's eyes got really big and he became giddy, letting go and snatching it,

"Deal! Fuckin' take 'em!"

"Gladly." Quickly, Ranboo looped his arm around the person's shoulders and led them away, surprised at the little resistance they had as he wormed through the crowd. Finally, he let go as there were less people, letting out a sigh of relief as he finally relaxed. He shook his head, rubbing his face with his hands with a groan as he tried to calm his racing heart, "Amu, that- Oh Xisuma save my soul..."

"Kid, what the fuck were you thinking?"

Ranboo's eyes snapped open at the stranger's critical tone, gawking, "Excuse...me?"

"Why did you step in like that, you could have gotten in deep shit too!"

"I...I just wanted to help?"

"Why? Let me guess, you're gonna make me owe you something now, is that it?"

Ranboo was taken aback by the sudden hostility, blinking owlshly, "No?"

"Then why?"

“I just wanted to help because it was wrong, alright? Can’t a person just be nice?” The stranger went quiet from that, not seeming to have an answer. Ranboo sighed, shaking his head, “Look, you just- you don’t owe me anything. What I did was just common decency, okay? You can go on your merry day now...” Ranboo paused before making random motions, not really knowing the person's name, “Uh...person.”

He turned and started walking away, only for the person to speak up again, “Eret.” Ranboo stopped and turned back, tilting his head in confusion. To his surprise, he watched as the person reached up and pulled down his hood, finally showing his face, “My name. It’s Eret. and...perhaps I was just a *bit* too critical there...sorry.”

Eret had a mess of curly brown hair on his head, wearing a simple golden circlet that complimented the iridescent scales that dusted his hands, sides of his face, and even across the sides of his neck, and two slightly hooked fangs pinched at his lower lip. She gave him a warm, apologetic smile, and Ranboo swore that if he could see her eyes behind those odd-looking glasses they were probably just as friendly.

He held out his hand as he returned the smile, Eret took it and gave it a shake, “I’m Ranboo,” Glancing down, he took in Eret’s outfit. Eret wore a loose, off-shoulder white dress shirt, a black belt around his midsection, and moss green pants with black boots. Ranboo found himself admiring it a bit with a smile before bringing his attention back to Eret's face, "And it's fine. I guess it's a bit hard trusting people to not have sour intentions, so it wasn't entirely uncalled for..."

“Still...you did actually help me, and since you aren’t making you owe me for it, let me buy you lunch at the least. Treat you to some of that fish stew I was talking about?”

Ranboo’s stomach growled once again at the proposal, loosening up as he felt grateful, “That sounds more than amazing...”

“Then follow me.”

=x=

After the incident with Tommy, Schlatt decided to be more cautious with the area they were in. Where there was one chimera, there was a high possibility of there being more. The next morning, the adults went in pairs for washing so that one could keep guard while the other cleaned themselves off. The pairs were Quackity and Schlatt, and Cap and Slime.

Schlatt leaned back against a willow tree as he faced away from the lake, listening to Quackity’s chattering as he whittled away at the piece of wood he’d been working on during their travels and

giving brief, short responses. Eventually, Quackity asks something that gets his full attention.

“Alright Mr.Stoic, tell me, have you got any fears?”

Schlatt snorted and rolled his eyes, “If I did have any, why would I tell you?”

“I owe you, remember dumbass? Plus, I don’t have any reason to use them.”

“Fine, but only if you tell me yours.”

“Deal~”

Schlatt stopped what he was doing and set the wood and the knife in his lap. He rested his hand back against the tree behind him with a soft sigh, “Okay....well, this is gonna sound kinda ridiculous but...I have these bad phobias of deep bodies of water as well as any kind of lava pit.”

“Okay, lava makes sense, but *water*? Why deep bodies of water?” Quackity laughed loudly while Schlatt let out a nervous laugh, “It um...it has to do with something that happened in uh...in the past and shit. I guess.”

Quackity grew quiet at that, almost as if he felt bad for laughing, “Oh...you...you wanna talk about it?”

“Do I..?” Schlatt trailed off, quiet as unease began to weigh heavy on him.

Schlatt frantically tried to swim for the surface as the water only rose, desperate for air as he felt unconsciousness taking him more and more. He was going to drown. Of all the things in his life that he thought were going to kill him, he never thought it was going to be drowning.

“Fuck no!” Schlatt cried, trying to shake off the unease he felt, “Look, I don’t think you noticed, but I’m not really a ‘gushy, sit in a circle and talk about our feelings~’” kinda guy, alright? Never have been, and I probably never will be.” He hadn’t meant to snap, but the subject was not one he liked to dwell on.

Though, as Quackity remained silent, he felt a bit bad and sighed, “Look it just- it has to do with a part of my past I'd rather forget. I was... *friends* with this harpy guy, and it...it wasn’t great.”

“Ah...okay...”

Uncomfortable silence formed between them, and soon enough Schlatt went back to whittling. However, it wasn't long until Quackity spoke up again.

"Hey, Schlatt?"

"Hm?"

"Genuine question...just...just look at me real quick?"

Schlatt sighed before turning, circling the willow to look at Quackity, "What is i-"

Opening his eyes, several things went off at once. Quackity had his back turned, wings stretched out a bit and water dripping from his hair and feathers, his lower half still in the water. Schlatt would never admit to the way his heart leapt into his throat and face start to burn, and Quackity's tone was much softer and more hesitant than usual, "This...This is gonna sound really weird, but bear with me here, because it's really fucking hard to ask this..."

"Fuck- ah- o-okay?" Schlatt cleared his throat as Quackity continued, "You- you mentioned you know- *knew* a harpy- somebody with wings- and so I- I thought that- that my wings- w-well- the- the thing is-" He struggled, fumbling and cursing under his breath as Schlatt quickly put two and two together.

Finally calming down as he realized what was happening, "You can't properly clean your wings..." Schlatt butted in, making sure he used a more genuine and soft tone rather than a teasing one as Quackity hushed, "Because of two reasons that I can only guess. One is that you've spent such a long time with them tucked unnaturally tight against your back without rest that when you stretch them the way they are *supposed* to be, it hurts, and second is that because of it hurting to stretch them. And with them having- to put it bluntly- some sort of deformity that makes them so small...you can't reach very well."

Quackity nodded numbly, hugging himself as he was quiet. Taking a bit of pity, Schlatt sighed, taking off his shoes and the wrap around his feet and shins before sitting and dipping his lower legs in the water and flicking water at the shapeshifter, "Alright, come over here bird-boy. I'll help."

Without protest, Quackity backed up until Schlatt could easily touch his wings, "I'll need you to work with me here, and put up with some pain. I think I want to have you starting some wing muscle stretching exercise's to try to get some of that fuckin' dexterity and shit back."

“*Now?*”

“No! No- fuck no not now. I mean the days following this.” He reached forward and gently ran his fingers through the feathers of his left wing, grimacing, “Jesus- fucking shit, man. How long has it been since you properly preened...” He tisked, frowning, “This really isn’t healthy at all.”

“Fuck you man...”

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

Quackity let out a surprised laugh and Schlatt smirked softly, finding he liked the sound. He cleaned Quackity’s wings quietly after that, fully concentrated and cautious about avoiding any of the more sensitive zones. Every once in a while, he heard Quackity letting out small titters and content chirps, and slowly his wings had turned from a dusty tan to a more soft, blondish brown. It felt...nice.

Schlatt hummed, silently hoping this wouldn’t be the last time Quackity asked for his help with this.

=x=

Late into the night, a carrier dove flew into the window of a large castle, flying through massive halls lined with beautiful paintings, before finally perching on a tree in a beautiful room.

"Darling?" The voice that rings through the hall is accented, cheerful and endearing. He looks through the massive room, the roof of stars glimmering above him as he makes his way through the field of colorful flowers.

"I'm here, love!" A familiar voice laughs. Turning, he can see the blond waving to him from by the lake and smiles lovingly, making his way over,

“Jimmy, it's late...why are you out here?”

Jimmy shrugs and flexes his pristine white wings before placing a wreath of flowers overlapping his beloved's crown, "It's a beautiful night," he answers simply, "And of course I wanted you to worry about me so you’d finally get out of that stuffy room of yours.”

He laughed as Jimmy interlaced their fingers, gently cursing the taller one out as he leaned down a bit to kiss the other man, “Oh hush, I get out of the castle more than you do.”

“Yes, to do *more* work.”

“I have to plan for the festivities somehow!”

Jimmy laughed before pulling the shorter man in, bending down a bit to kiss him while singing, “Ah, my husband, always the workaholic~!”

“Jimmy!” Laughed the other, nuzzling their noses together while huffing, “You are so impossible...”

“And you love me for it anyway, Scott.”

“I do...I really, really do...”

The bird let out a twitter before flapping down, and Scott untangled himself to hold out his hand to the bird curiously. He raised a brow as he saw the message tied to it and he carefully untied it before letting the bird fly off, “Well lookie here, a late acceptance...”

“Oh?”

Scott unrolled the message and read it, a large smile spreading across his face as he read the four signatures, “Well my love..” He looked to the confused blonde, pecking his nose, “Things in the tournament just got a *lot* more interesting...~”

Chapter End Notes

Everybody welcome Eret! <3

Lemon Balm

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

Any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on tumblr, Instagram, or on discord! For insta:

The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, but I'm seriously new to Instagram and don't know much about it so bear with me. My @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

This took far longer than I meant it too- plz enjoy. I love you all. <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Slime watched the small ripples in the water as droplets fell from his hair and skin, admiring the serenity and quiet under the willow as he relaxed in the water. It had taken him an overwhelming amount of time to scrub himself clean from all the built up grime and oil in his skin and hair, which only made him question even more how long he'd been dead.

Cap was extremely patient with him, thankfully, not really saying much as he sketched out something in his notes. The quiet had given Slime time to think, but at that moment, Slime wasn't sure he wanted to think. There was an ever-present fog in his brain, and all he knows is that it is muddling the memories he thinks are important, making it harder to recall being dead and what had finally triggered his latest resurrection after so long. Trying to remember it only caused frustration and headaches though, so for the time being...

"Could we like- talk...?"

Cap looked up from what he'd been doing with raised brows, seeming genuinely surprised, "Oh? What about?"

"I...I don't know. Anything?" Cap laughed a bit at that, before sighing and shutting his book, "Alright...sure. I'll go first I guess...Schlatt tells me you're immortal. How does that feel...?" "Easy," Slime turned, swimming closer to him and pulling himself a bit up, resting his head in his arms on the bank, "It's torture. It's a constant struggle of trying to figure out if it's the days or the years that have passed. It's watching your loved one's grow old and die, and cities rise and fall, and all you can do is wander; meaningless and without purpose..." Cap turned his gaze towards Slime for the first time since he'd gotten in the water, the immortal's eyes unfocused as there's a solemn and lost look deep within them, "The first hundred years, it was sad but fun. Then, around three hundred years, I grew depressed. I couldn't handle the deaths of everyone I befriended anymore. I tried to kill myself- and that's when I discovered that my curse was more than just never growing old. I didn't have a soul to judge, so...I was forced to live again. That's when I started trying to find all the different ways I could die. I also became reclusive; started becoming

detached to the world around me.” He chuckled quietly, as if it was a funny joke, while Cap looked at him with sympathy. From what Cap could see from the exposed skin, there were plethora of pale death scars littered all over Slime’s chest, neck, and collar bone, and on his face there were paler, less recognizable scars across his eyes and in the center of his forehead. In the center of his chest there’s an extremely significant discoloration in the skin about the size of his fists, starting pale at the edges and growing more and more significantly grey towards the center. He watched as Slime almost absentmindedly put his hand over the spot, eye’s glassy as he spoke again, voice cracking and becoming soft and shaky as he did, “I can still feel where my soul used to be, you know...this one part of me thats frigid, cold, and empty...it’s just a void inside me. At first I didn’t notice it, but as the fun drained, I began to notice how I never felt fulfilled no matter what I did. I always felt empty and drained, devoid of feeling content...”

Slime took a hiccuping breath as he held it in, sniffing as he took a moment to collect himself again before continuing, voice a bit more solid now, “I think it was...around six hundred years...when I met the one who didn’t let me detach. He...it was just a random meeting one day. The ship we were on was sinking, we hopped in the same lifeboat, and from then on he became a scary-ass thorn in my side.”

“Who?”

“Ted, of course.” His eyes became more clear and he had a warm smile, “Yea he...he sort of pestered me because he had nothing better to do and nowhere to go. I tried to detach myself but he just persisted...He was a pure-bred demon. So he never died, and after...maybe a few centuries? He brought out the child in me again. Suddenly, the tables had flipped; now, he couldn’t get rid of *me* . He pretended to be annoyed and angry every time I died, but it was totally countered by the fact that he didn’t just abandon my body whenever I did.” There was a clear endearing way Slime spoke of Ted that warmed Cap’s heart, and for a moment his mind went back to X33n.

“Ha...Sort of reminds me of me and X33n...” Cap spoke softly, and Slime looked at him curiously, “X33n?”

“Oh yea.” He brightened a bit, “He’s...everything to me. We’ve been by each others sides since we were kids- I don’t think there’s a single important event in my life that he wasn’t by my side for...” He turned his attention to his sketchbook and flipped through his, showing him a sketch of a handsome young man with expressive features, “He used to pose for me all the time and traveled with me everywhere. His laugh was always something I could recognize, and he always put up with my stupid old humor, and whenever we’d fight he’d always go flower picking to give them to me...” Slime hummed, nodding as Cap drew back the notebook, staring at the sketch with a fond sadness, and Slime tilted his head, “If that’s the case...where...is he now? If you don’t mind me asking.” Cap’s smile faltered, brow furrowing, “He...we were separated and he got taken away by... *something* . I’m traveling to find him.”

“Oh...” Slime winced, awkwardly regretting asking. He inhaled deeply, “Well...He sounds great.” “He was...” Then, Cap said something that caught Slime completely off guard, “He’s my best friend.”

Slime’s eyes widened before he sputtered, slapping a hand over his mouth to hold in his laughter, “Uh- yea- y-yea-” He managed through breaths, “Best- best *friends* ? Okay- sure- let’s call it that.”

Cap raised a brow as Slime's laughter was slightly contagious, "What? What's wrong?" "Cap- Sparklez- buddy, pal. I- I don't- you-" He looked at Cap owlishly, leaving him even more confused, " *Best friends* ? That- the way you talk about him does *not* make you sound like best friends. It sounds like something else entirely."

Cap turned red up to his ears and he jumped quickly to his own defense, "Oh- no- no no no it- it wasn't like that I-"

Slime burst out laughing as Cap tried to defend himself, fumbling over his words and explanations. To Slime, it seemed abundantly obvious that was something more than Cap was saying, but as he watched him trip over his reasoning, it was quick to figure there was a sense of long-term denial there.

Reaching up, he put a comforting hand on Cap's arm, making him suck in a breath and looking at him wide-eye'd, "I'm just pulling your leg, dude. You can relax..."

Cap blinked wildly before slightly relaxing, releasing a breath and laughing shakely, "R...right...sorry I don't know what came over me..."

Retracting, Slime settled in the water again, humming, "Happens to the best of us. Hand me my stuff, please?" Cap reached to his side and grabbed a small bundle, handing it over. Slime unpacked it as Cap gathered his own stuff and stood, facing the opposite direction as Slime got out of the water and dried himself off. He put on a new, clean pair of clothes that Schlatt had temporarily loaned him before taking out his personal accessories and putting them on as well, "Alright, all dressed. How do I look?"

Cap turned to him, having calmed down from his embarrassment earlier, and smiled approvingly as he looked Slime up and down, "It's a bit loose, but other than that, looks good for now." Slime grinned before stretching to test out the comfort of his outfit. It was a simple off-white button up that hung loosely from his shoulders, a leather belt, dark brown pants, and around his neck he wore a necklace with all sorts of little trinkets. He walked over, throwing an arm over Cap's shoulders, "Great!" He exclaimed before pointing forward dramatically, "Now, back to the camp we go!"

Cap chuckled before letting Slime pull him along, and as they walked off his mind began to wander back to their conversation. He'd never put much thought into him and X33n's friendship, much less things like feelings. Feeling's were complicated, but what he and X33n had was always so effortless and free. He leaned on X33n as much as X33n leaned on him. Them against the world...

But at the same time, he guessed he might've just...picked up and suppressed any thoughts of something more between them, excusing things as just them being friends...

There's something surreal about how content this moment is, the peace and serenity on X33n's face as he slept with his head in Cap's lap worth all the gold in the world. He looks so soft as Cap slowly and carefully picks the crunched up autumn leaves from his hair, the golds, citrus, and auburn leaves gorgeous in the rich brown locks. The ground is littered in these gorgeous colors, the air crisp in his lungs as the fall breeze blew gently through the forest. Their horses sat not that far away, fully laying down as they felt completely safe and secure while close to their humans.

He freezes as X33n groans softly, eye's fluttering as he starts to open them, squinting up at Cap. Cap gave a teasing smile, "Finally awake I see?"

X33n snorted, stretching a bit before sitting up and leaning into Cap as he whined, "Shut up...I was tired." Cap opened his mouth to respond, but cut himself off as X33n turned his body and pressed his face into his neck, breath hot against his skin as he winded his arms around his waist in a lazy sort of hug, "Plus, you're comfortable. That ain't a crime."

Cap was completely frozen, heart rate picking up as flush traveled up his neck and to his face. X33n had his head tucked just under his jaw, completely at peace with the situation as he relaxed. He flexed his hands a few times, completely unsure what to do as his stomach felt funny and his brain began short circuiting.

Eventually, X33n pulled back and looked up at him, shining eye's a mix of deep brown and dark blue full of curiosity as he tilted his head, brow furrowing in concern, "You okay? I'm not making you uncomfortable, right?"

"No!" Cap answered quickly, "No I just- I- you-" He swallowed a lump in his throat before laughing nervously, "It just- it surprised me, is all."

X33n raised a brow, unconvinced, but eventually chuckled and rolled his eyes, dropping the subject, "Alright, whatever you weirdo."

Cap gave a laugh of disbelief, giving him a look of faux offense as he let himself become distracted from the previous embarrassment, "Excuse me?! I'm the weirdo?"

"Yep. A wacky weirdo."

"I can't believe this. I've been shot. Betrayed!"

X33n got up as he threw his head back and laughed, "Gods, such a drama queen."

Cap calmed down, smiling fondly as they continued to banter, any thoughts of his previous feelings abandoned now as they went back to their usual routine.

X33n had always been able to make him feel a way nobody else did. It would only make sense if he really was in love with him, honestly...

But...there could be other explanations, right?

Right...

Cap shoved it down again. He didn't need to dwell on this right now, he needed to find X33n first...

He'd deal with feelings later.

=x=

Talking to Eret was quite an adventure for Ranboo. He'd seen a lot with quite a few stories to tell, but when asking about his species he was quite...dodgy. It wasn't his business anyway, admittedly, he had just been curious. She did, however, say that she had no real hometown, but her specified god she worshipped was Amusix. Ranboo easily falls into that subject, "It's an interesting pick, really."

Eret raised a brow, giving him a bemused smirk, "Why? Because he's evil?"

Ranboo became surprised, stiffening and scoffing slightly, "Evil? No no no- who in their right mind told you Amusix represents *evil* ?"

"Well, it's said it's he who created the sirens when jealous of his brother Xisuma's mermaids-" Eret tilted their head, and Ranboo shook his rapidly, "No- Amusix was never jealous of his brother, and he didn't necessarily create sirens either. It's true he favors them, but that's only because of the story of the siren and the sailor..."

"The siren and the sailor...?" Ranboo's eyes lit up at Eret's curious tone, excitement filling him, "You don't know the story?"

Sensing his adoration for the story, Eret shifted to get comfortable and leaned in to listen, "Please, do tell..."

Ranboo beamed, clearing his throat, "Okay, it does like this; Have you ever heard of the Golden Goat? The Dreaded pirate Docm and his lover, a man he pursued against all odds, Grian?"

"Who hasn't?"

Ranboo chuckled and turned to his satchel, fishing out the large book of myths and prophecies and flipping through it. He stopped as he reached a chapter labeled *The Golden Goat*, flipping a bit more till he reached a section labeled *The Sailor & The Siren*, pointing to the beginning, "Well, the sailor and the siren is a story about one of Doc's crewmates and a siren who seeked Doc out in false assumption of love, but in the end found something grander. This siren has many names, but the most common have been Xelqua and Mim- short for Mimic."

" *Mimic?* "

Ranboo nodded before holding a finger up to shush Eret, "Now, it all starts because Mim led a failed hunt on Doc's ship passing through siren territory. For his failure, he was punished and branded as such. Even so, Doc never left Mim's mind. Now, Mim had never felt things like love and lust, and while quelling on it he eventually ran into Amusix, and it's said he asked the god what love and lust felt like. Now, Amusix didn't really know himself, as he had never felt things as deep as true love or burning lust. Either way, in a futile attempt to chase what he felt, he begged Amusix for a chance to chase the pirate captain. Although it was not a god's place to meddle in mortal affairs, Amusix pitied him, and struck him a deal. He was given a year's time with human legs. If he failed to earn someone's true love in that time, on the final sunset he will turn into seafoam, never to live again."

"That sounds a bit extreme..." Eret inquired, and Ranboo laughed, "Oh, but it gets sadder. And believe me, this isn't the saddest of the myths involving Amu."

" *Oh boy ...* "

"So, Mim gets legs and finds Doc's crew. Now the thing about Mim, is that he's nearly identical to

Grian visually- Hence, *Mimic* - and knowing that Doc is in love with Grian, he tries using that to his advantage. But Mim...doesn't understand love. He doesn't understand that true love isn't about appearance, and so as the year ticks by, it's only more and more apparent that Doc never even glances in Mim's direction. Becoming more hopeless, Mim is swamped with self doubt and confusion, not understanding why his efforts weren't working."

"Gods, Please tell me this doesn't end with him dying after finally learning what love is."

Ranboo snorted, "Just keep listening...Now, slowly, he observed Grian and Doc from afar, and against his will, he eventually began getting to know one of Doc's crewmates; a quiet, reserved man named Etho. Etho himself felt sorry for Mim, and tried to befriend the siren in an attempt to lift his sadness. However, as his final days drew nearer, Mim only felt sadder and sadder, becoming convinced that he had been doomed to an unrequited love. His final day came while they were docked, and as sunset came, he made his way to the peak of a seaside cliff and awaited his fate."

Eret frowned, "Kid, be honest, does this..."

"Shhh..." Ranboo put a finger over his mouth, "While he waited, Etho came to find him, asking him what troubled him so. Knowing it no longer mattered, and hoping to be remembered by at least one good soul, Mim poured his heart out to Etho. He told him his whole story, from the first encounter to the deal with Amusix, and how his death was coming because he knew he'd failed. Etho became saddened, informing Mim that it was never love that he felt for Doc, but misunderstood lust. Mim became torn up by this, but it made sense, and in acceptance, his last wish was to tell the others that he'd simply returned to the sea. The last thing he needed was for the people who were so kind to him to mourn him when he didn't deserve it. Etho agreed, but taking Mim's hand, he drew him close, and refused to leave until Mim was truly gone. Nobody deserved to die alone..." Ranboo's eyes teared up, his voice straining a bit as he told the story, "And as the sun fell over the horizon, day fading into night, Mim shut his eyes...until several moments later, when he opened them to find he was still there. He didn't understand why he wasn't turning to seafoam- he'd failed to gain Doc's love. The sea rose and suddenly Amusix appeared before the two, Etho dumbfounded as Mim stood and began to question what kind of cruel joke this was. Amusix laughed, for this was no joke. Mim *had* succeeded, but not in the way he'd thought. See; the deal was not to make *Doc* fall in love with him, but simply *somebody*. Amusix knew that Mim would never win Doc over, and so he'd tipped the scale in Mim's favor on the hopes he'd win someone else over. And as far as Amu had known, Mim had done just that. Shocked, it suddenly came together as Mim turned to Etho, and all at once he began to realize how differently he felt with Etho than everybody else. Tearing up, he cautiously drew forward into Etho's arms, and with that, their love for each other is returned in full, and so ends the tale of the sailor and the siren."

With that, Ranboo turned to Eret, sniffing and laughing a bit, "Are you alright?"

Eret turned away, pushing his sunglasses up and wiping his eyes before readjusting his glasses, "Of course that's just...that's really beautiful..." Ranboo's smile softened, "It really is..."

"I've never heard stories about Amusix like that..."

"There are plenty like it. See, many people mistake Amusix for evil, since his brother Xisuma is such a force of good. And while Xisuma looks more human, Amusix looks more monstrous, with multiple arms that represent the many seas, hair of seafoam, red eyes, and deep blue skin full of scars. But while he deals in collecting and delivering souls, making deals, and is responsible for creatures such as gorgons, sirens, and giant squid, creates whirlpools and tidal waves, and while his territory is the great seas; people often forget that Xisuma created harpies, dragons, and griffins. Xisuma was the first to stir storms and hurricanes in his rage, and his territory is the great skies and expansive stars and space outside our world. Xisuma is capable of just as much- if not more- damage as Amu. The two gods are twin brothers without any feud, and it's unfair that one is considered more evil than the other."

Eret nodded slowly, considering the blond's words, humming, "How old are you again?" Ranboo snorted, "Seventeen."

"You're quite smart for a teen. Pretty mature too." She complimented, and Ranboo felt pride from the statement, heart warming, "It's really nothing, just believing what my mother taught me."

"Well, then your mother is pretty smart too." Ranboo beamed at that before a deep sadness struck him, making him falter as he rested his eyes on the book, remembering back to his kingdom. He desperately hoped Puffy and his mother were alive and well- he didn't know what he'd do otherwise. Eret seemed to notice his dampened mood, and quickly he decided to change the subject in hopes to lift it again, "Are there any other stories that you like? I'm interested in hearing more."

Ranboo blinked quickly, snapping out of it. He looked between Eret and the book before biting his lip and thinking. A story came to mind, and quickly he flipped through the book, stopping when he reached a chapter labeled *The God & the Soldier*. The left side of the page had an illustration of two figures, one god and one mortal, holding each other close as trails of opposite colors left their chests and mixed together.

"The God and the soldier is a heart wrencher. In the early days of the world, before even Technoblade had emerged, Xisuma created another smaller god who took domain over festivities and all forms of love. According to legend, this god's true name was so long and complicated that nobody translated it all, and so it's just been shortened to a singular, more human name; Scott." Ranboo started, his mind moving away from his mother as he focused on the story, "Now, it's said that many kingdoms worshipped him just as they did with the other gods, but no matter what, Scott became interested in one kingdom in particular. The reason why, is because in that kingdom resided a young avian soldier who was tasked with guarding his temple, and every day the soldier sat at his statue and silently lamented about his position. The man shared his constant failures in love, pleading to Scott to help him."

“Oooo, I like where this is going.”

“Fascinated in the young soldier, Scott disguised himself as a young servant boy and took human form before approaching the soldier. Without much effort, he was shocked to find himself quickly falling for the mortal. Weeks and months passed where they would spend entire days talking by the base of the statue, and each time they separated Scott told himself it was the last time, only to come back the next and see him away. It was no surprise when the soldier reciprocate his feelings, thinking that the god he’d prayed to had answered his prayers without knowing that very god stood before him. But as all good things do, it didn’t last...”

Eret playfully hit the table dramatically, “Oh come on, seriously?!”

Ranboo cackled before looking outside, seeing it was pitch black. He smirked and shut the book, making Eret’s jaw drop, “Wait, you’re not gonna finish the story?” Ranboo slipped the book in his satchel and stood up, “Nope. If you wanna hear the rest, I’m leaving town at the break of dawn tomorrow. Meet me at the Rosemary tavern and I’ll tell you the rest before I head off. Sounds good?” Ranboo began forming a plan in his head, hoping silently that Eret would take the bait.

Eret guffawed, grinning and sitting back, “Oh that is so fucking dirty yet so clever, kid.” She crossed her arms, snickering, “Fine then. Break of dawn, Rosemary tavern. You better tell me.” “Deal. Thanks for the meal!” Ranboo slipped out the door and began running through the mostly empty streets, partially tired as he sprinted across town to the Tavern. He walked in and showed the man at the bar his key before heading upstairs, unlocking and opening the door. Walking in, he kicked it shut behind him before going to drop his satchel with a sigh.

“So you’re finally back, took you long enough!” Spat an annoyed voice. He jumped and his eyes snapped open, his veins turning to ice as he took in the sight before him, “W-what the-?!”

A semi-translucent apparition stood before him, leaning back against the nightstand with his arms crossed and an annoyed look. Ranboo pressed himself back against the door, contemplating opening the door and bolting as he gawked, “Y-you- what- w-who are you?!” The man huffed, standing upright, “Fine, we’ll start with the basics,” He walked over and held out his hand for Ranboo to shake as he stated firmly, voice having a slight echo, “My name is Jack Manifold, I’m a ghost, and I died twenty years ago.”

Chapter End Notes

I know it seems like I just used Ranboo as convenient god lore dump but I promise it goes deeper than that.

You get a virtual cookie and a pat on the head if you found the joke about Scott's youtube name, and before anybody asks; No, Mim/Mimic is not an oc. He's basically NPG in this universe; if you know, you know. <3

Bachlor's Button

Chapter Notes

The discord for this fic: <https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Tumblr: fantasticalbee

Any fanart or stuff can be sent to me on tumblr, Instagram, or on discord! For insta:

The tag I'm hoping to use is MM&MCYT since it's not taken, but I'm seriously new to Instagram and don't know much about it so bear with me. My @ is fantasticalbee, just like my tumblr!!

Guys I promise im not dead, college and sudden hyperfixations just kick my butt.

Enjoy <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Alright- repeat that all for me again, slower this time.”

The ghost sighed in annoyance, “My name is Jack Manifold. I died 20 years ago. You found my stuff, took it, and that is why I'm here now.” Ranboo nodded slowly.

He got up, went to his satchel, took out the necklaces, and held them out to Jack.

Jack stared.

One moment passed by. Two. Three. Then Jack rapidly blinked, head tilting and nose scrunching up, “What the fuck are ya doin’?”

“Giving you back your stuff.”

“Oh for fuck sake-!” Jack exclaimed, making the prince flinch back, “That’s not how it works you dumbass!”

“Well I don’t know!!” Ranboo cried back with alarm, throwing his arms up in defeat, “All you’ve said is that I took your stuff and that's why you’re here!! What do I do then?!” There was legitimate distress in his voice, and Jack groaned loudly, “This is hopeless...”

Taking a deep breath, he tried again, “The necklaces are the reason I've attached to you. But what I need help with is to find someone else...”

A lightbulb flickered above Ranboo's head, "You...want to find Ophelia?"

"Yes!!" The ghost cried with joy, "Thank god, you aren't *completely* braindead!"

"Rude-"

"I want to find *Ophelia* ! The Moon to my Sun, the light in the dark night, my *sister* -" He reached out to touch Ranboo and the others eyes widened as he felt something impact him, memories dancing before his eyes.

The woman's hand was soft within his own, held tight as they ran through the forest, hearts hammering in sync, fueling the magic inside him that flowed out through his fingertips and created the flickering flame in his palm. He paced his breaths, conserving his air as his lungs burned-

"Jack, stop-!!" He was yanked to a halt by Ophelia, feet staggering as he nearly ran straight in a ravine. Panting, his mind raced as he swallowed thickly, "S-shit...thank you, 'Lia-" They heard the villagers' angry voices in the distance, heads turning to figure out the direction it was coming from. He frowned, brow furrowing, and Ophelia squeaked out, "I'm so sorry, Jack- I-i didn't- I was so stupid-"

He turned to her, heart aching as he read her guilty expression, seeing her eyes welling with tears, "Hey, no-" He reached up to push the fallen locks of hair out of her face before gently cupping her cheek, thumb wiping away a falling tear. He stepped closer, tilting his head up to kiss her forehead before resting them together, "None of this is your fault, understand? You did the right thing..." Jack attempted to keep his voice steady, feeling a bit stronger as Ophelia's magic kindled his own.

As the voices grew closer, Jack breathed out, "I promised I'd protect you. I was born to do just that." Stepping back, he brought up their conjoined hands and pressed his lips to her knuckles, eyes stinging as a cloud of deep, hopeless gloom hung over them. Looking up, he looked at her face and tried to engrave every last detail into his mind, heart aching as he felt as if it might be the last time he'd ever get the chance to. He exhaled when he was finally ready.

"I want you to run in the opposite direction, and don't stop until you are sure you're safe... Understand?"

"Wh...what about-"

"I'm going to lead them as far away as possible, and no you cannot change my mind about this..."

Ophelia searched his face for a moment before nodding, "O...okay..."

“Go.”

He let go as she turned and ran, waiting until she disappeared behind the spiraling tree's before summoning the fire in his palm brighter than before. Hearing a villager scream about finally seeing him, he bolted in the opposite direction, making sure they hung just off his coat tails.

“I never saw her again, after that.” Jack said solemnly, after the visions faded away. He had a pained look in his eyes, making Ranboo's stomach twist as he recognized the familiar look of grief, “I'm...I'm sorry...”

“No need to apologize. Not your fault, but...I *do* need your help. I can't pass on until I'm reunited with her- meaning I know she's a ghost just like I am, but I don't know *where* ...” Ranboo thought about it for a moment, before deciding; “I-I can't reassure anything, but...I can at least try. But I'm heading somewhere specific, so I can't drift too far off course.” He spoke firmly.

Jack nodded, “That's fair enough- thank you...”

In seconds, Jack faded away as if he were never there at all, and Ranboo staring where he once stood. Glancing out the window, he groaned in slight despair as he recognized the sun coming up over the horizon, realizing he had stayed up the entire night. Even worse- Puffy was still gone, and it was time for him to move on.

Well, at the very least, he had Eret. The hybrid was partially a stranger, yes, but she proved herself to be mildly trustworthy and friendly at the very least.

Gathering his stuff, he safely tucked away the necklaces, triple checking before leaving his room.

=x=

“Mermaid territory ahead!” Dream called, and Sapnap excitedly pulled Karl to the railing, “Oh! You're going to love seeing this-” He dug in his pocket and pulled out strings of pure gold necklaces and jewelry. Karl eye'd it curiously as the noirette watched the changing water color. The ship skirted along clearer, turquoise water, and he could see an entire coral reef filled with all kinds of fish, “Mermaids love gold because it protects them from Sirens, so whenever pirates pass through these waters, we try to sprinkle gold in the water as gifts. It helps keep relations.” He handed Karl a few bracelets, rings, and necklaces, and demonstrated by tossing a gold bracelet into the waters.

Karl curiously followed the example and threw in a necklace. After a few moments, the water was breached by a mermaid, who smiled and waved to them before putting on the necklace and diving once more, "Woah..." He gasped, eyes lighting up at the sight. Grinning, Sapnap leaned in and whispered, "Y'know, They say the queen of the mermaids is actually married to a land-dweller..."

"Really?"

"Mhm~"

"Huh..."

As Dream watched over his crew, he thought of a way to pass the time, and smiled, "Hey Sap!" The noirette looked over to him curiously as he spoke, "How do we feel about a shanty?" Sapnap's eyes lit up and he smiled back, "Hell yea! What are we thinking, cap'n?"

Dream hummed, his mind flipping through shanties, until a certain one came up. Taking a deep breath, he began-

"Now we are ready to head for the Horn; Weigh, hey, roll an' go! Our boots an' our clothes boys are all in the pawn," Recognizing the tune, Sapnap joined in as Karl listened with interest, **"To be rollickin' randy dandy O!"**

"Heave a pawl, oh, heave away,"

"Weigh, hey, roll and go!"

Finally picking up on the song, George joined in, raising his voice for the first time in the past few days, "The anchor's on board an' the cable's all stored!"

Dream and Sapnap let out laughs as the three of them sang in unison, **"To be rollickin' randy dandy O!"**

Sam joined next, "Oh, man the stout caps'n and heave with a will-!"

"Weigh, hey, roll an' go!"

"Soon we'll be drivin' her 'way up the hill!"

"To be rollickin' randy dandy O!"

Dream took the lead again, "Heave a pawl, oh, heave away;"

“Weigh, hey, roll and go!”

“The anchor's on board an' the cable's all stored!”

“To be rollickin' randy dandy O!”

The hooded stranger chimed in, seeming through amused by their antics as Sapnap pulled Karl to dance with him on the deck, their feet making a beat, “Heave away, bullies, ye parish-rigged bums,”

“Weigh, hey, roll and go!”

“Take yer hands from yer pockets and don't suck yer thumbs!”

“To be rollickin' randy dandy O!”

Karl laughed as he danced with Sapnap, finally joining in as he attempted the next line through his joyous laughter, “Heave a pawl, oh, heave away~!!”

“Weigh, hey, roll and go!”

“The anchor's on board an' the cable's all stored~!”

“To be rollickin' randy dandy O!”

Sapnap sang again next, “We're outward bound for Tinsley Bay!!”

“Weigh, hey, roll and go!” Sapnap and Karl yelped as they fell over together, bursting into laughter as they couldn't hold it anybody.

George joined their laughter and Dream attempted to continue, barely holding in his own laughter, “Get crackin', me lads, it's a hell of a way!!”

“To be rollickin' randy dandy O!”

“Heave a pawl, oh, heave away,”

“Weigh, hey, roll and go!”

“The anchor's on board an' the cable's all stored,”

“To be rollickin' randy dandy O!”

Laying on the deck, Sapnap and Karl joined back in, the entire crew bellowing in unison for the final few lines, *“Heave a pawl, oh, heave away; Weigh, hey, roll and go! The anchor's on board an' the cable's all stored, to be rollickin' randy dandy O!”*

The entire crew cheered, whooping and laughing as they finished the song. For the first time in a while, George felt his spirits lift, his mind drifting from his sorrows as he walked to Dream and hugged his arm, leaning into him. Not a word passed between them as Dream turned his head to kiss George's cheek, then refocused on steering.

Sapnap and Karl simply laid on the deck, chatting as their fingers remained intertwined as the ship fell back into its normal, quieter rhythm.

=x=

Bad groaned as his eyes fluttered open, the world around him slowly becoming clearer as he tried to move. Pain shot up his tail as he tried to move it and he hissed loudly, tears welling in his eyes.

“Ah- Don't try to move...” He felt a large hand rest on his tail and he turned to the side, seeing Techno looking at him with a soft look in his eyes, “You've been asleep for quite a long time since you blacked out...”

“W-what...happ...ened...” He managed to croak out, and Techno moved to the side table, grabbed a glass of water, and brought it to Bad's lips to drink, “I'll tell you in a moment but- ah...” His usually monotone voice had a more underlying gentle tone, “I'll be honest...it's not great.”

Bad drank gratefully, the cool water soothing his parched throat, “I...I-i'm not really sure how to put this lightly, Bad...”

As he finished, Techno put the glass aside and reached over, taking Bad's hand tenderly as the siren looked up to him, “The gold net did...a *lot* of damage to your tail...” Bad's heart started to sink as he listened, “They had to remove a lot of scales to get to certain burned areas that could've

gotten infected otherwise- a-and..." He could see Techno's struggle, the older man's mouth opening and closing as he tried to figure out his words. Reaching out, he put a tender hand on Techno's cheek, making him look at him with slight surprise as he smiled weakly, "You don't have to sugar coat it, Tech...just...just tell me. I can handle it."

Techno searched his expression for a second before he exhaled, gazing sadly, "You're not allowed to swim until you're fully healed, and if- on off chance, your tail doesn't heal properly anyway...you'll never be able to swim again..."

Bad's eyes widened, heart plummeting and twisting as his gaze was casted downward, towards where Techno's hand held his own, thumb rubbing his knuckles in a small attempt of comfort. Without a word, his stinging eyes watered and silent tears fell down his face, a wail desperately wanting to escape his lips. Shakily, he let go of Techno's hand and lifted his arms to wrap around his shoulders. Techno hesitated for a millisecond before leaning down and wrapping his arms around Bad in return, tucking his head under his chin and hugging him semi tightly.

The two remained like that for a while as Bad's crying never reached above a soft whimper, but soon enough, he finally drew back, sniffing as his face was covered in tear streaks, hands slipping back down into Techno's. Reaching across, Techno cradled Bad's cheek in his palm, using his thumb to wipe away any remaining falling tears as he spoke barely above a whisper, "A...are you alright...?"

Bad sniffled and nodded before looking up at him, giving him a weary smile, "Mhm...I...I can handle not swimming for a long while. I-it's only an off chance otherwise, right?" Techno nodded, as Bad spoke with a worn out voice, "Then I...I just have to keep positive. No use being miserable over such a tiny set back, right?"

Techno couldn't help his swelling heart as he smiled widely back, in slight awe over the siren's attempts to hold his head high, nodding, "Right."

Bad's brow raised a bit as his heart fluttered, gaze becoming tender, "You...you have a beautiful smile."

Techno's heart leapt in his throat, blood rushing to his face as he finally realized he was smiling, growing a bit more sheepish. He chuckled quietly, averting his eyes a bit awkwardly, "Ah...Thank you."

Snapping out of it, Bad's face flushed red from embarrassment and he took a deep breath, blinking away his remaining tears, "Now- d-do we have anything to eat? I feel like i'm starving."

I promised the others on the discord server a sea shanty, and thus I gave em a sea shanty <3

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